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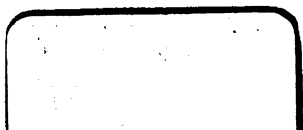
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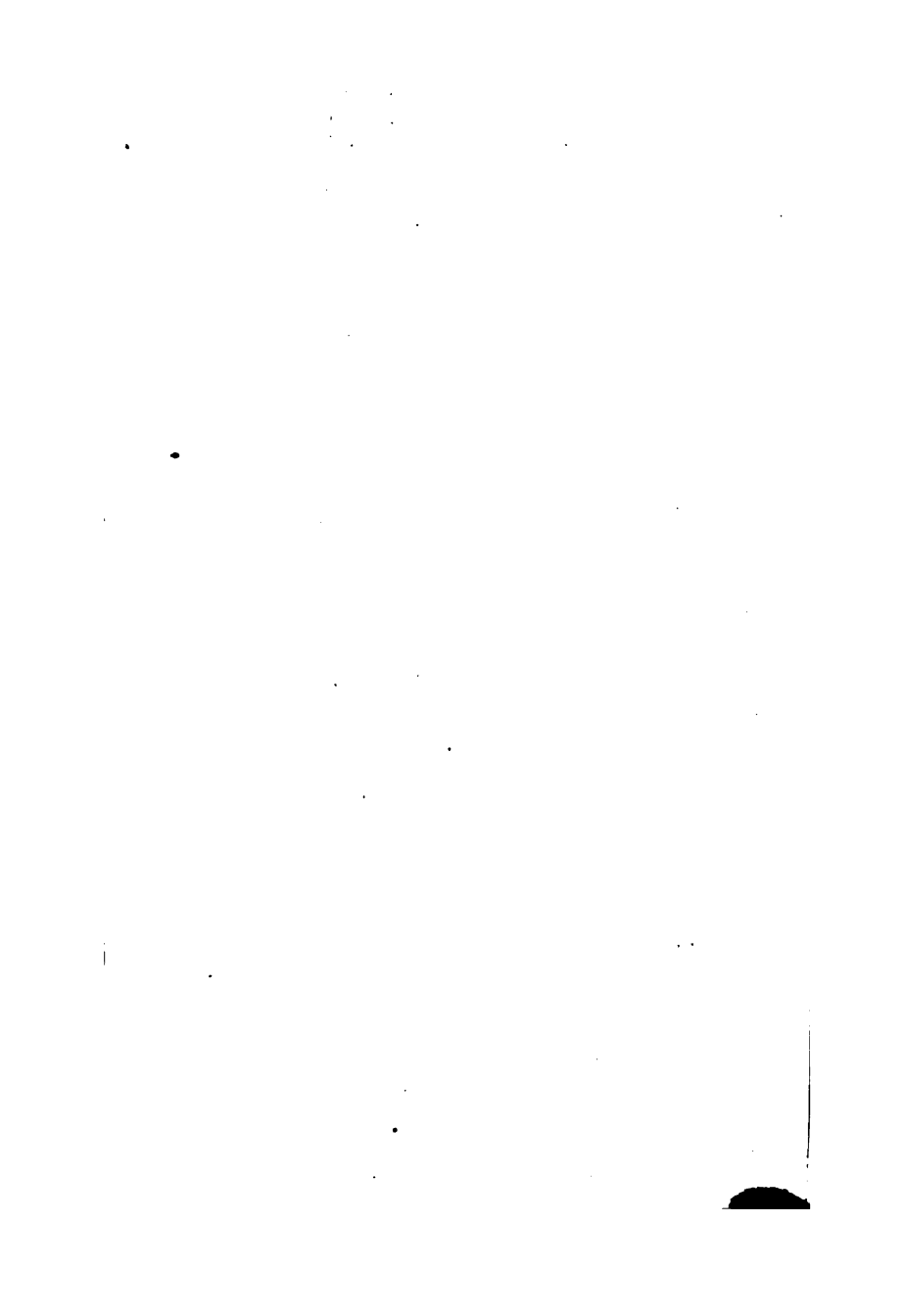
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ROBERT B. BROUGH.

MARSTON LYNCH;

HIS LIFE AND TIMES
HIS FRIENDS AND ENEMIES
HIS VICTORIES AND DEFEATS
HIS KICKS AND HALFPENCE.

A

PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY

BY

ROBERT B. BROUGH,

LATE EDITOR OF THE "WELCOME GUEST"

WITH PORTRAIT

AND A

MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR

By GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

LONDON:

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MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

I TAKE up to-day, the pen which has fallen from a dead man's hand. The sadness of my task is embittered by the consciousness that the writer whose decease I record, was one of my oldest and dearest friends. But a few days since, and bowing under a recent domestic bereavement of my own, I read the affectionate tribute which a friend and fellow-labourer had paid to the memory of one whom I had known and esteemed for fourteen years. Yesterday, it was poor ALBERT SMITH. To-day it is my duty to trace a few lines in sorrowful mention of another loss to literature and to friendship. Their theme, alas! is ROBERT BROUGH.

He died on the night of the twenty-sixth of June, at his brother-in-law's house at Manchester. His dear Nurse—his widow now—had got him so far in the hope of taking him to North Wales. There had been little hope of him for months; but just a feeble chance remained that the bracing atmosphere of a mountainous country might do him good. His medical advisers had forbidden that he should be taken to the sea-side. There was no use in send-

ing him to Nice, or to Devonshire, or to the Isle of Wight. Indeed, for months, those nearest and dearest to him knew that the most that could be done for him was to soothe and cherish him to the end. There was just a little oil left in his lamp, and it was consumed, and he died. He had not any chronic or organic disease that I am aware of, beyond an inherent weakness—a weakness that seemed to waste away his muscular fibre with such slow, unerring regularity, that you might almost note the progress of his decay, day by day, for years. I knew him first in 1847. He was a mere boy; but he was weak and ailing. He never looked well. Each successive time I saw him until a few weeks since he was in some degree or manner worse; and now he is Better—for he is dead.

Robert Barnabas Brough was born in London in 1828. Three brothers and three sisters, all hale and hearty, I am glad to believe, survive him. He passed a considerable portion of his childhood and his youth in Wales and in the North of England. His father, one of the [worthiest and most amiable of men, was engaged in some commercial pursuits; and his sons had a plain English Education. Robert Brough had neither Latin nor Greek; but before his thirtieth year—he was always learning something—he had taught himself plenty of French, and some German, and a little Spanish. I am sure, poor fellow, that he had a sufficient appreciation of the advantages of a classical education; but, as from the age of fifteen or sixteen he had to earn his livelihood by the labour of his own hands and brain, the most he could do was to add to his stock of knowledge such

adjuncts as he deemed most valuable for his working career. His taste and capacity for pictorial art was very great, and under favourable circumstances might have been developed into fame and fortune. He would, with that proper artistic training he could never afford to undergo, have become a graceful and varied artist. As it is, he only leaves behind him a few unfinished oil-sketches and a mass of humourous drawings. His comic pictorial efforts will bear a very favourable comparison with those of THOMAS HOOD.

I believe that, as a lad, who had to push his own way and get his own bread, he tried half-a-dozen avocations before he discovered his real one, Literature. He was a merchant's clerk and a portrait painter at Manchester and at Liverpool. He was fond of amateur acting; and he, with his brother William, wrote plays and acted in them, and painted the scenery, as dozens of boys have done before. The brothers even started a little weekly satirical paper, called the *Liverpool Lion*, to which Robert Brough, in addition to parodies and jokes, and comic essays, contributed political and humourous cartoons, in that style of which Mr. Leech is so great a master. It happened that Robert and William Brough had written a burlesque on the "Tempest," called the "Enchanted Isle." This, being performed at Liverpool, attracted the notice of Mr. Benjamin Webster, then "starring" in that town. The "Enchanted Isle" was a very boyish production, but it was full of broad fun, and was not even deficient in very brilliant wit. The piece was transplanted to metropolitan

soil, and performed with great success at the Adelphi Theatre. Other managers became eager for burlesques, and the "Brothers Brough," to Robert's misfortune, attained immediate popularity, and, in theatrical circles, celebrity.

I say, for his misfortune; for he leapt at once from provincial obscurity, raw, half-taught, and quite deficient in worldly experience, into a prominent position among the wits and *viveurs* of a bustling time. He had almost everything to learn; but his dramatic successes made him at once the compeer of such men as Planché, Morton, Oxenford, Bourcicault, Reach, Albert Smith, Charles Kenny, Shirley Brooks, and Mark Lemon, men who had been before the public for years—who were used to its ways, and indifferent to its seductions. He had the run of the green-rooms and the literary circles, when it would have done him much more good to have had the run of a decent library, or even of a garret, a book-stall, or a coffee-shop, with some back numbers of the *Quarterly Review* on its shelves. Then he speedily found that Christmas and Easter will not come a dozen times a year, and that he could not earn a livelihood by burlesque writing, however handsomely those productions might be paid for. Let it not be imagined that the managers starved him. I believe that from Messrs. Charles Kean, Buckstone, Webster, Keeley, and E. T. Smith, and especially from Messrs. Robson and Emden, he never received anything but kind and generous treatment. But they could not be always bringing out new pieces, and he could not be always

inventing them. The "Brothers Brough" parted company—as joint-authors, at least, never as affectionate relatives—and each betook himself to the work-a-day life of literature. He married very early in life, and has left a widow and three young children to mourn his untimely loss.

Robert Brough had little aptitude for the dry but remunerative labours of the daily and weekly press. His *forte* lay in humorous narrative, in light essay, in pure joke-weaving and *persiflage*, in satiric, and sometimes in pathetic, not sentimental, poetry. When he had room and time, he was an admirable story-teller; and some of his ballads are replete with grace and picturesque colour. Summing up his works from memory, I can chiefly recall his sharply satirical *Songs of the Governing Classes*; his translations, or rather adaptations of Beranger's *Songs of the Empire, the Peace, and the Restoration*; his novels of *Marston Lynch*, and *Which is which?* or, *Miles Cassidy's Contract*. This was the last book he published; and the *Saturday Review* thought the fact of the author being on his death-bed, too favourable an opportunity for making a savage onslaught on him. It is so safe to attack a dying man! Then he wrote a *Life of Sir John Falstaff*, as text for Mr. George Cruikshank's admirable plates, illustrating the fat knight's history. There is, also, from his pen, a capital translation of Alphonse Karr's novel, *La Famille Alain*; and in the *Train*, a magazine undertaken as a speculation among a knot of friendly literary men, there is dispersed a

number of exquisite paraphrases of Victor Hugo's *Odes et Ballades*. His brother, John Cargill Brough, is about to collect the best of his poetical fragments for republication.

In *Household Words*, and *All the Year Round*, he wrote a variety of graphic essays and pictures of manners, and notably a charming little piece of fugitive poetry, entitled "Neighbour Nelly." He was an early and prolific contributor to the comic publications called the *Man in the Moon* and *Diogenes*; but I don't know what *clique* interest or *clique* squabbles excluded him from the columns of *Punch*. For some period, also, he officiated as Editor of the *Atlas*. For a shorter term he held a literary appointment with Mr. Buckstone at the Haymarket Theatre. For some months he was the Brussels correspondent of the *Sunday Times*; but newspaper work, as I have already observed, was unsuitable to his turn of mind. His last regular engagement was with the proprietor of the *WELCOME GUEST*, as its conductor and chief contributor. Of his productions in the *WELCOME GUEST* my readers are the best judges. I may, however, offer an opinion that "Doctor Johnson" is one of the most beautiful poems that ever flowed from the pen of a contemporary writer.

How am I to speak further—and with common fortitude—of my dear, dead friend?—I, who knew him, and loved him, and was once young and enthusiastic, and poor and miserable, with him; who have often lagged behind to let him win the race, and fondly hoped to see him one day prosperous and famous; who am not worthier than

he, and am yet alive, the senior, and strong? If his memory be assailed, I shall know how to rebuke and shame the slanderers; but I had rather that his praises came from other lips. As I write this, in the silence of the night, I lift my eyes from the blotted sheet, and see hanging round my room the pictures of three dear friends, all good and tender, and true as Bob was. They are all dead: all dead within six months. Who is the survivor that can tell when *his* turn may come, and when a friendly hand may be required to close *his* eyes, and turn *his* picture to the wall?

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

BROMPTON, *July 20th*, 1860.



MARSTON LYNCH.

CHAPTER I.

TOPOGRAPHICAL, AND DISCURSIVE, BUT GENTEEL THROUGHOUT.

THERE is situated on the north west coast of England a very important sea-port town, which, with the reader's gracious permission (it is as well to err on the polite side with a new acquaintance), I shall call out of its name, and speak of as Longport. I have six excellent reasons for doing so. The first is, because I choose. The other five are equally good, but for six more reasons (which are still better) I intend keeping them to myself.

About two miles from Longport, on the high road to York, there stood, some few years ago, an isolated suburb of excessive gentility, entitled Ash Grove. I speak of it in the past tense, because the participle "isolated" no longer applies to it—the spirit of commercial enterprise, supposed by writers in "Chambers' Edinburgh Journal" to be so conducive to the happiness of this country, having long since connected it with the town by an agreeable chain of factories, tan-pits, "cottage property," and a

gas-works or two—which is all very civilised and satisfactory. At the time I speak of, none of these spirited indications of national prosperity existed; but, in their stead, you walked through two miles of common-place fields and hedges—very pleasing to the eye and bracing to the spirits, but, from a commercial point of view, most contemptible.

Ash Grove consisted of a single row of houses, “semi-detached,” and (with one tremendous exception, to be noticed presently) as like each other as a handful of horse-beans—(I am fond of novelty in my similes, and consider this a striking improvement on the two peas of conventional literature). They were of modern construction—in fact, they might be considered the pioneers or outworks of the noble army of civilization that has, since, so successfully invested the territory. To say they were of modern construction is admission of some swindle or other in their arrangement—of some pretensions to appear what they were not. Each house, in fact, meanly assumed to be twice its size. This was managed by a system of reciprocal economy—two houses being built together in one, lawn to look like a single residence—as though each had said to its Siamese neighbour, “You pretend to be part of me to *my* friends, and I’ll pretend to be part of you to *your* friends.” Of course nobody was taken in by it. But this seems no objection whatever to the ingenious inventions of the great modern science of veneering.

There were nine houses in Ash Grove. From this statement, the reader with a mathematical turn will at once divine that there was one house that *did* stand by itself. This was NUMBER NINE—the imposing exception alluded to in a foregoing parenthesis. Of Number Nine and its distinguished occupants (the FIRST FAMILY in Ash Grove!) we shall speak in due order. Their rank and social importance would entitle them to precedence; but as we are fond of numerical precision, and moreover take a Red Republican delight in insulting Great People, we will begin with Number One.

Miss Crooze's seminary for young ladies. Terms forty pounds per annum, six towels, and a spoon and fork, *to be returned* to the pupil on leaving—(you are requested to bear this in mind, as a fact significant of Miss Crooze's superiority of character); only a limited number of pupils taken; extra accomplishments by the first masters in Longport. Miss Crooze was the "fine woman" of the row. She was just leaving off being young, but continued to be handsome. In right of having lived six years as governess in the family of one of the wealthiest ship-owners of Longport, who had had the good sense and breeding to treat her as an equal, she was supposed to belong to "superior" society—just as from a pair of very thick black eyebrows, and a slight appearance of having neglected to shave, she was supposed to be strong-minded. In reality, her father was a highly respectable tailor, in the county of Monmouth, and her smallest pupil (Polly Bickerstaff) bullied her incessantly. As she was a perfect lady by nature (if the term be not profanation applied to one of such humble origin) and a thoroughly intelligent, accomplished, and honest woman—as it was found the very rawest material, in the shape of girl, could not remain long in contact with her, without in some measure catching the humanising influence of her goodness, candour, and refinement—Grove House Seminary flourished. The "limited number" was always filled up by people whose forty annual pounds might never be doubted, and the black-haired Spanish-looking tailor's daughter went on her quiet way and prospered—putting away money in the honest hope that some deserving, sensible fellow might yet be found to claim it, with herself, before the silver streaks should utterly predominate over the raven black, and the little lines at the corners of the large dark eyes should deepen and widen—warning her to keep it to herself.

Number Two. Mrs. Murke—paradoxically known as "Mrs. Murke, the old maid," so called, because she had occupied the same house for some years, in a single capacity, and only recently taken to herself a husband, which inno-

vation had made no difference whatever in her character and external habits. Her most striking characteristics were red velvet dresses, and an infinite number of bodily ailments—rendered interminable by an iron constitution, of which she was given to boast. Mr. Murke was nobody. He had not so much as a red velvet waistcoat, or a toothache, to rescue him from temporary oblivion. If you had asked any resident in Ash Grove (and, mind you, they were all pretty well up in their neighbours' business in that active colony) to describe to you Mr. Murkes' age, his personal experience, his profession, his means, in short, anything about him, you would have received no satisfactory or definite answer.

The responsible tenant of Number Three was Eliza Crayner; but, in the eyes of the row, Miss Crayner had no independent existence. The Miss Crayners—for there were two—were looked upon as one and indivisible. They dressed alike, moved, talked, and thought alike. The same easterly wind tinged their virgin noses with the same roseate hue; the same sensitiveness to bad smells—to which they appeared perennial martyrs—caused those delicate organs to curl in precisely the same manner. They were on the wrongest possible side of five-and-thirty, but sustained by a hopeful faith in the endurance of some unremembered attractions. They were extremely well connected; and, in consequence thereof, had refused to "go out" in life—that is to say, to accept comfortable situations—preferring to starve genteelly in Ash Grove on the proceeds of surreptitiously marketed fancy-work, recruiting their mortified systems by periodical invasions of their numerous good connections. Their dependencies were a fast brother—in a genteel banking-house (salary eighty pounds a-year—annual expenditure a hundred)—and an obscure father in the Docks, who was kept in the background as much as possible; but who would occasionally assert himself (under Dock influences) by insulting the neighbouring maid-servants, and borrowing shillings. The Miss Crayners had also a lodger, but of him anon.

At Number Four the Rufflestone family had pitched its tent. More gentility—albeit it was impossible wholly to conceal the fact that Rufflestone was a grocer in High-street, Longport. But Mrs. Rufflestone (whose education, at the expense of an unknown father, of whom it had probably been the death, had cost more than that of six of the accomplished little ladies Marian Crooze turned out to ornament society two or three times a-year), always spoke of the shop as “the warehouse,” or the “counting-house.” Mrs. Rufflestone was pretty and young, and remarkable, beyond those attractions, for a habit of nursing twins in a low-necked yellow satin dress, with her hair in curl-papers. Mrs. Rufflestone’s mamma was a turbaned pensioner on the establishment. Transatlantic visitors from the Docks, invited home to cement an occasional bargain with Mr. Rufflestone, had pronounced that lady “a caution.”

With Number Five we have nothing to do, the inhabitants of that mansion being arrogant, exclusive people, who do not recognise their neighbours, and consequently will form no part of our *dramatis personæ*. It is true that Mr. Smuff is a Landing Surveyor, and his wife enjoys a little independent property—privileges which might entitle them to hold themselves aloof a little. But we can have no patience with people who give themselves such airs, as soup, fish, and wine to dinner every day, *whether there is company or not* (a fact patent to all the inhabitants of Ash Grove, through back stairs influence), and who consider themselves better than their equals.

Numbers Six and Seven must be considered unlet, but will possibly find occupants in the course of our history.

We have so much to say about Number Eight, that we will begin a new chapter to say it.

CHAPTER II.

TERPSICHOREAN AND SEASONABLE.—FINALLY
MYSTERIOUS.

CHRISTMAS eve! It was a great day for Ash Grove. Mrs. Merripebbles, of Number Eight, had issued cards for a genuine, old-fashioned, English Christmas party. Everybody was to be there (Smuff, of course, contemptuously excepted). There was to be a mistletoe, and the cushion-dance, and everything in the hearty old-fashioned style.

Mrs. Merripebbles had carried out her old-fashioned prejudices so far as to make her old Highland servant, Elspeth Mac Something (the clan has never been rightly ascertained), represent the cards of invitation orally, and in her own person. That weird official, some days back, had been seen flying from house to house in Ash Grove, conveying the thrilling tidings, after the manner of the Fiery Cross of her own primitive people, and requesting dramas from the invited, in the most unblushing manner. Everybody agreed to come; for Mrs. Merripebbles was genial and popular, and fun was certain. All available hands were immediately set to work on ball dresses (for the time was short), and the sums the Miss Crayners must have earned, furtively and by night, by lending a helping hand (purely to oblige a friend, and on consideration that it shall not be mentioned to a living soul) would more than

account for the unwonted splendour in which those spinsters were enabled to appear on the momentous evening.

And who was Mrs. Merripebbles?

Mrs. Merripebbles, reader, was the wife of Mr. Merripebbles. I will forestal your second question, and inform you, at once, that Mr. Merripebbles was the husband of Mrs. Merripebbles.

It was a peculiarity of Ash Grove, and probably is of the civilisation of which such settlements are the representatives—that the husbands in it went for nothing. Wives were paramount; daughters had a powerful voice in the representation; mothers, and even sisters, were tremendous. But a husband was a mere man to go to business in the morning; return at a stated time (and in a becoming condition) in the evening; and be called upon in town on Saturday at the counting-house, to settle an imperative claim, for which nothing on account would be taken and no time allowed.

Mr. Merripebbles was no exception to this rule. He was just the sort of man who could not be any exception to any rule, if he tried.

He was a mild-mannered stockbroker, six feet high, and weak in the back, between forty and fifty, who wore hats much too large for him. He would have been happy and easy-going had he not been so easily frightened. He lived in a perpetual state of alarm at bankruptcy, cholera, and eternal perdition. He would probably have gone melancholy mad on one of these considerations, had not his attention been constantly distracted from their contemplation by a more proximate object of terror in the shape of his wife. Merripebbles loved his wife, not passionately—he was not strong enough for that,—but abjectly, and revered her every word. Mrs. Merripebbles was worthy of love and reverence; but if ever there was a Tartar, she was one.

Merripebbles came home from the office, at six o'clock, to assist in preparations for the party. He was in high

glee, for there was a good deal of the child about the poor timid old boy, and the notion of a party pleased him. He had, moreover, hit upon a stupendous surprise for his wife in the shape of a huge game pie, which he had brought home on his lap in the omnibus (suffering severely from gravy in the transit). He rang the bell cheerfully, and thought over a little pun he intended letting off at supper-time, if he could remember it. At that "if" he grew despondent. Merripebbles had no memory!

Mrs. Merripebbles opened the door herself, in a high state of flour. She was a stout, comely woman of forty, with a good face, if it would always keep so. But it changed about waywardly.

The sight of his dear, tyrannical, trouble-giving, trouble-saving helpmate, cheered our friend (you are requested to look on him as a friend, reader, for he is one of the best old fellows in the world) up at once. He forgot the pun—immediately and for ever—and gave her a hearty kiss, which she returned as heartily.

"Save us, Mr. Merripebbles!" she said, seeing his bruised and greasy parcel; "what have you got there?"

"That's tellings," said her husband, with an abortive wink.

"Don't be ridiculous, Mr. Merripebbles. You surely haven't been laying out money?"

"My dear, I thought"—

"You thought—nonsense—let me see what it is. A game pie—that must have cost you thirty shillings at least. And pray what is to become of me and the children if you waste your money in this manner?"

"My dear, I thought surely at Christmas time"—

"Christmas time, indeed! A nice time to be wasting our little means in riot and luxury—when we ought to be thinking of our souls, and giving what we can to the poor. I know what you are going to say, Mr. Merripebbles; that the party was my planning, and none of yours: it was your place to check me, Mr. Merripebbles"—

"Surely, my dear—I see no wrong in giving our neigh-

bours a little harmless recreation. And with regard to expense—if you'd only got a little plainer supper and cooked it at home"—

"Mind your own business, Mr. Merripebbles. What money I spend is my own. I am accountable to nobody. You are talking in this way just to exasperate me, when you see my hands are full—not a soul to help me—and all the *blanc-mange* to make."

This conversation had led the speakers into the drawing-room, sumptuously prepared for the evening's entertainment, round which Merripebbles glanced with intense satisfaction. A stolid, bony looking girl of fourteen, with a puzzling face, gorgeously dressed in evening costume, entered, and threw herself with *nonchalance* on a sofa. Mrs. Merripebbles turned sharply on her.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Maud," she said, "putting on your new satin slip and tarlatan at this time of the evening, when the people won't be here these two hours?"

Maud was impassible.

"I agree with your mamma, Maud," said poor old Merripebbles, with a certain deference in his manner (which was not remarkable, as he showed the same to everybody). "When you see her so fully occupied you might make an effort to assist her."

"If Mamma wanted help, there was plenty to be had for money," said Miss Maud, with the most perfect indifference, buttoning a difficult glove.

Mrs. Merripebbles turned back hotly on her husband—

"Mr. Merripebbles, have the kindness to interfere with your own children. Maud can do as she likes. She is not your child, and though she has no father, I'll let you know—James's Church!" (this was a favourite interjection with Mrs. Merripebbles) "I've left the sherry bottle on the kitchen table, and that old Jezebel Elspeth"—

Mrs. Merripebbles darted impetuously from the room, and in a few moments was heard singing placidly to a

custard-beating accompaniment. This was followed by a breakage of crockery, and a "rowing match" with the Gaelic Elspeth, that seemed likely to end in blows, but was suddenly dissipated in a hearty burst of laughter, at some undivulged kitchen pleasantry. Soon afterwards the lady returned to the drawing-room with a beaming countenance, kissed old Merripebbles (to his intense delight) under the mistletoe, complimented Maud on her choice of attire, and skipped upstairs to dress, like a stout fairy.

"Your mother is a most extraordinary woman," said Merripebbles, smoothing his bald head, and looking deprecatingly at his step-daughter (for such was Miss Maud's relationship to him); "sometimes I really don't know what to make of her."

"I know what to make of her well enough," was Maud's icy reply; "she makes herself very ridiculous."

Merripebbles looked at the young censor with something as much like indignation as he was capable of. It sometimes occurred to him (dimly, as most things did), that a little hard smacking occasionally would be no bad discipline for this spoiled and self-willed young lady. But all interference with Maud on his part was rigidly tabooed. Maud was his wife's daughter by a dead husband, whom that wife sometimes abused him for speaking of as an unjust man (the strongest term Merripebbles could apply to an unmitigated scoundrel), and for defending whom against some incredibly heinous accusation she sometimes threatened him with separation *a mensa et thoro*. Moreover, Maud Carlton was a ward in Chancery, and a wealthy heiress. Poor Merripebbles was the least of worldly of mortals, but his trade was in money, and he had felt its terrors. He therefore treated Maud with a queer awkward respect. Maud treated him, with contempt, sometimes warming into pity.

Merripebbles shifted from the dangerous ground.

"We shall have a nice party, I suppose, Maud?"

"I am sure I don't know."

"But Mr. Lynch is coming, isn't he, my dear?"

"I don't see that he will make it a nice party. He's very pompous and stupid. He'll bring Lucy, I suppose. That's something. I like Lucy."

Miss Carlton, aged fourteen, gave out her likes and dislikes as the edicts of an absolute monarch, which, in some measure, she was.

"Young Mr. Tofts from Number Nine is coming. I met him in town to-day."

"He's an awkward, long-legged boor; no girl can dance with him if she wants to keep a skirt to her frock."

"My dear, you should not be prejudiced. He's a very excellent, rising young man. He has got a splendid business, and is making money"—

"I've got plenty of money," said Miss Carlton, with a yawn. And she put her feet on the sofa, turning her back on her step-parent, who looked ruefully, as for sympathy, at the unsuccessful pie.

The first knock at the door came. Old Merripebbles jumped up with delight at the sound, like a boy at a pantomime when "the fun begins." Miss Crooze was the first visitor; come early to see if she could do anything. She had trudged down the road through the snow, by herself, in a hood and goloshes. These, she threw off in a business-like manner, and beamed on the empty room like what is conventionally called a duchess, which means, like a handsome *distinguée* woman, though I have seen duchesses who do not come up to the definition. Merripebbles kissed her under the misletoe immediately, performing a short dance of triumph by himself in the passage, after the achievement.

Mrs. Merripebbles came down glowing with good humour, matronly beauty, and violet satin. [Ignominious dismissal of Merripebbles to the upper regions to change his linen.] The guests began to arrive in quick succession. The Miss Crayners—frostbitten but sportive—announcing that their brother Albert couldn't arrive till

late, as he was dining with some gentlemen. They had taken the liberty of bringing Mr. Howker, the gentleman who was staying with them (the Miss Crayners would not plead guilty to a lodger)—they were sure Mrs. Merripebbles would not mind.

Mrs. Merripebbles was delighted to see any friends of theirs (she really was). Mr. Howker, who was short and common-place looking, moreover, wearing pumps (even then obsolete at Ash Grove), appeared of a comic and familiar turn. He “hoped he saw” Mrs. Merripebbles—which pleasantry he followed up by the more practical one of kissing that lady under the misletoe. The two Miss Crayners ran up stairs, screaming in terror; but Mr. Howker (whose rent was probably all right) seemed to entertain no idea of pursuit. He entered the ball-room with a pantomime bow, which was unfortunately lost on Marian Crooze, who was looking out her quadrille music, and upon Miss Carlton, who appeared to be asleep. Mr. Howker walked to the fire-place, where he looked over a begrimed copy of verses, apparently getting the words by heart.

More knocks. Enter Mrs. Murke, in red velvet and sciatica, with the impalpable, indefinable Murke hovering somewhere in the rear, as her shadow. Enter Mrs. Rufflestone, in pink satin and feathers, with her five sisters, all more or less dependant on Rufflestone, and turbaned mother. Various supernumerary guests throng the scene. Eventually a quadrille is formed, and Miss Crooze (who doesn’t care about dancing—she has enough of teaching it) strikes up her own favourite set in her best manner, which is a very good one indeed. Howker attempts to be very prematurely funny in *Cavalier Seul*; but the pumps are against him; he is frowned down, and remains at a temporary disadvantage.

A very loud aggressive knock! A thrill goes through the assembly, and murmurs of “Mr. Lynch” are heard. Mr. Lynch is a wealthy Longport merchant and banker—Mrs. Merripebbles’ distant relative. As it is known he could buy up all Ash Grove with greater facility than any

settler in that district could pay for a pair of boots, he is a character to be looked on with awe. But it is not Mr. Lynch. It turns out to be only Mr. Tofts from Number Nine. Mr. Tofts is a rising young solicitor, and rents the largest house in the row. Mr. Tofts counted on a sensation on his entry, which he would, under ordinary circumstances, have created. But, unfortunately, Mr. Lynch is expected, and Tofts has the humiliation of knowing he is looked on in the light of a disappointment. He stalks gloomily to a seat, and affects lassitude—having at all events succeeded in throwing a momentary damp over the festivities.

But Tofts's sister follows and restores liveliness. She is stout, florid, good-looking, and rather vulgar. She is rapturous in her manner—coming in with an evident determination to take the room by storm. She kisses everybody fervently, especially the two Miss Crayners (whom she has kept up half the preceding night to "take in" the dress, beneath whose bondage her unwieldy form heaves and creaks like a ship); she seems to say, "Oh! let us enjoy ourselves without distinction of rank. Forget that I live at Number Nine, and am a favoured mortal. I am not proud I assure you." She seizes old Merripebbles, gushingly, by the arm, addresses him as "a Love," and vows she will dance the first quadrille with nobody but him—an arrangement to which that smiling veteran submits, as it is his custom to do under all circumstances.

At length comes a knock that cannot be mistaken. It is Lynch this time. He enters and all is hushed. Gregory Lynch is a hard-featured, puffed-out man of forty-five or fifty—a type with which we have all been familiarised, in novels and life a thousand times; one of those men that have been graphically described as "unable to take their hands out of their pockets." He strode across the room and patronised Mrs. Merripebbles with a condescending shake of the hand, and a noisy greeting. He nodded to the host and said, "How are you, Merripebbles, how are you?" barely acknowledged young Toft's greeting (whose

rank on 'Change fell 50 per cent. in the estimation of all present), glared on the company generally, and stood on the hearth-rug defiantly, as who should say, "Dare to be merry in my presence, and I'll sell some of you up." Mr. Gregory Lynch next buttoned up his coat and complained that the room was cold. He had apparently brought the cold in with him as everybody felt chilly.

What business had a man of his description in such an assemblage of harmless merry-makers? The only possible excuse for his being there was a little, quiet, slim girl of Maud Carlton's age, who had slipped in with him, and gone up to kiss Maud, by whose side she remained for the rest of the evening.

Honest, impulsive Mrs. Merripebbles, who was no more afraid of her rich relative than she would be of you, reader, saw his depressing influence, and walked him off to cards in the adjoining room, where he was left at the mercy of Mrs. Ruffestone's mamma, Mrs. Murke, and a dummy of some kind—probably Mr. Murke.

After such terrible stagnation something enlivening was wanted. Howker, who had watched his opportunity, sat down to the piano, and, unsolicited, burst into song. It was a comic song after the manner of John Parry. Heaven knows how many sleepless nights Howker had spent (after office hours) in studying it. At any rate, he sang it very well. The effect was electric. Howker's pumps and *Cavalier Seul* were forgotten immediately. He became at once master of the situation. Miss Tofts pronounced him a "droll dear." Mrs. Merripebbles laughed till she cried. Merripebbles (whose weak point, if he only dared give way to it, was humour) thrust liquor into the hands of Howker, high speechless with gratitude for the amusement that vocalist had afforded him, and falteringly requested him to sing another. Howker sang another. It was better than the first. The two Miss Crayners looked triumphantly around, as much as to say, "Get a gentleman like *that* to stay with you if you can?" Howker skipped blithely from the music-stool and requested the honour of Miss

Crooze's hand for the next polka—an honour which Marian, who was never proof against good humour and the desire to please, immediately accorded, to the unspeakable disgust of young Tofts and Albert Crayner (recently arrived), both of whom she had informed "she never danced."

How short-lived is human glory! There came another knock at the door; after which Howker became for the rest of the evening as a thing that was not and had not been.

"Hech! mam!" cried old Elspeth, rushing into the ball-room without apology, (a formality she never indulged in), "There's the queerest mon speering after Mesther Lynch. Look till him."

The queer personage alluded to had followed Elspeth to the ball-room door. He was a handsome young man, with a dark, intelligent face, and sharp piercing eyes—not without a twinkle of humour, and a long, black moustache. What was most remarkable was, that he was attired in a complete Mexican suit, richly ornamented with tassels and silver bells, resembling the costume of a Spanish bull-fighter.

"I beg your pardon," said this outlandish personage, in the most perfect English, and gracefully removing his slouched sombrero as Mrs. Merripebbles approached him, "Excuse my intrusion; but this stupid woman would not let me state my business quietly. Mr. Gregory Lynch is here, I believe."

"I am Mr. Gregory Lynch," said that imposing personage, who was no more free from curiosity than the youngest girl in the house, and had pressed forward with the crowd.

"I am Don Sancho de Sanmarez," said the stranger, "but that is immaterial. I have just landed from America, and have left your brother-in-law, or cousin, Mr. Everard Lynch, who was my fellow passenger, at your house, I fear in a dying condition."

"Brother-in-law—Everard," gasped Mr. Gregory, betraying more emotion at the tidings than anybody had thought him capable of.

"Yes; I learnt where you had gone, and, as I know the town well, thought I would come and fetch you myself. I have a vehicle at the door. I fear time is precious—"

"Certainly, Mr.—a-hem—Count; I am much obliged to you for your attention. My dear Mrs. Merripebbles, pray keep Lucy for the night. I'm with you, sir."

The foreign gentleman was sitting on a hall chair apparently in a state of exhaustion—

"Pardon me—I have done all I need do. I am sadly fatigued and not well. If this lady will allow me to rest myself a minute or two, I can get a fly at the end of the road, and return to my hotel."

"My dear sir—" and Mr. Gregory Lynch rushed down the lawn in the most extraordinary state of excitement. In a few minutes wheels were heard driving off at a rapid pace.

The process of thinking was a weakness in which our impetuous friend Mrs. Merripebbles was not accustomed to indulge (there are not wanting misogynist philosophers to acquit the female sex, generally, from the slightest tendency to that failing). When she learnt that Mr. Everard Lynch (a distant relative, whom she had never seen) was in a dying condition, her first impulse was to dismiss her guests and send out for sackcloth and ashes, or their readiest substitutes. But the sudden and unexpected departure of Mr. Gregory Lynch—whom she looked upon as a species of Incubus or Frankenstein monster, incautiously invoked by herself—was such a relief to her spirits, that she felt a necessity for a more reckless degree of hilarity than had been yet introduced in the course of the evening's entertainment. When, to this, was added the presence of a titled foreigner of distinguished manners, and in such a costume as had never before been seen at Ash Grove—if even in Longport—she felt at once that nothing was to be done but to begin to spend the evening.

She accordingly took Don Sancho by the arm, as

though she had known him for years, and the appearance of a stranger in a Mexican dress was an organised portion of her programme, and dragged him into the ball-room.

"My dear Madam," the stranger protested; "in this ridiculous dress?"

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Merripebbles, "half the girls are in love with it. You know that as well as I do."

More than half the girls, and some of the matrons, *were* in love with it. Whether Don Sancho knew it as well as his hostess remains to be seen.

Of course the *entr  e* of this unforeseen Mexican—or whatever he was—created a powerful sensation. Mrs. Rufflestone (whose expensive education had comprised Spanish) fluttered up to him (her mamma exasperating the other young ladies by circulating the announcement that, whatever the gentleman's nation, Arabella was competent to discourse with him; which, as the gentlemen spoke most excellent English, seemed not unreasonable). Miss Tofts, in a heavy whisper to the eldest Miss Crayner, remarked that the new comer put her in mind of Wallack as Massaroni, on the force of which compliment I do not profess to enlarge. The gentlemen exchanged sneers; young Tofts remarking in a side whisper to Albert Crayner (whom he was not in the habit of recognising under omnibus circumstances) that he didn't know there had been a masquerade at "the Royal" on that particular evening; to which Mr. Crayner responded by a wink, significantly buttoning the pockets of his inexpressibles (which contained one and threepence). Howker, who was a mere honest plebeian and buffoon, utterly incapable of envy, hatred, or malice, planted his chair in front of the exotic visitor and stared at him, apparently learning him by heart, as though he were a comic song.

As soon as Don Sancho had been comfortably installed on a sofa, and recruited with a couple of glasses of wine, he rallied marvellously.

"Understand me," he said with the utmost *bonhomie*, "had I expected to find myself in such agreeable society,

I should have taken measures to appear in a more civilized costume. But I had worn this dress on board ship (you can't think how comfortable it is), having been used to it. My poor travelling companion becoming suddenly worse on our reaching this port, I had to help him ashore, anyhow, without time to change. Having simply a message to deliver, I thought I might hide myself under a big cloak, and sneak off to my hotel—"

"You speak very good English for a foreigner, sir," said young Mr. Tofts, with thoroughly genteel impertinence.

"There is nothing very remarkable about that," replied the new lion promptly, "as I was educated at Trinity College, Dublin."

There was a frankness about this parry for which Mr. Tofts had not been prepared. He turned away and commenced a demi-semi flirtation with Mrs. Rufflestone.

Albert Crayner, flattered by the notice of Tofts, and hoping for recognition in the nine o'clock vehicle of the following morning, determined to follow up his advantage. He said in the ear of his new-found patron, but loud enough to be heard by the whole room—

"I didn't know that Don was an Irish title."

"Do you happen to know that Donkey is occasionally an English title, young man," said the Don sharply; and then, turning round to Merripebbles, whose constitutional timidity appeared excited by the mere possibility of a row, "I beg your pardon. This gentleman uttered a rudeness evidently intended for my ears. As a stranger I was bound to resent it. But I owe, not him, but you, your lady, and guests, an explanation, of who I am. I have given you my name. I intend staying at the York Hotel. I am the son of a noble Mexican family, educated in Ireland. I heartily forgive this young gentleman his excusable rudeness to me, inasmuch as my *bizarre* costume, and unceremonious appearance, unquestionably entitled me to criticism, humorous or speculative. I trust he will forgive my return rudeness. If not, he has my address."

The difficulty was easily settled. Mrs. Merripebbles led Albert Crayner up to shake hands with the Don. Albert, flattered at the bare possibility of his ever fighting a duel, apologised fulsomely—assuring the latter that he had meant nothing (which was what he usually meant). The Don insisted upon Albert securing a partner for a new dance. If he (the Don) was to be a damper on the evening's amusement he would be off to the York immediately.

The Don was no damper. Quite the contrary. He made that evening party such an entertainment as never was known in Ash Grove before or since. He told the most wonderful stories of wild sports in the West. He sang a Spanish duett with slatternly, clever Mrs. Rufflestone, accompanying the performance on an old guitar—produced from unknown recesses at Number Three—which he strung and tuned in no time. He made the dignified reserved Marian Crooze confess that she had learnt the Fandango, as a show dance for pet pupils on breaking-up occasions, and prevailed on her to dance it with him, Mrs. Rufflestone (who was a perfect genius at every accomplishment but that of keeping her children clean) learning the tune in three minutes, and playing it in a manner to make Pagni or Alfred Mellon ashamed of himself. He talked law, politics, and Exchange to Tofts—always paying that dignified personage the compliment of assuming that he understood the topic of conversation. He whispered fast jokes in Albert Crayner's ear. He encouraged Merripebbles in the art of joking, repeating the mild little whispered attempts of his host aloud, and always managing to improve them on the way. He brought Howker out; called upon him for songs which that vocalist had never thought of attempting, and always helped him out with words or tune when in a difficulty. He proposed the health of Mr. and Mrs. Merripebbles at supper (with a touching allusion to the pie), representing Merripebbles in such a fine-old-English-gentleman-light as to make that stockbroker disport himself, after supper, in

Sir Roger de Coverley, not to say with arrogance, but with unwonted self-assertion.

Finally, on breaking up for the evening, he insisted on Tofts, Crayner, and Howker accompanying in a fly to the York, with a view to cigars. The position of Tofts, as the first man in the row, would not admit of such concession. He declined, with obvious reluctance. Albert Crayner—too glad of any new acquaintance worth boasting of—was only too happy. Howker, who was a most unmitigated hero-worshipper, would have followed Don Sancho to the world's end.

"Heiress to four thousand a-year you say—the little step-daughter?" said the Don.

"Some say six," was the reply of Crayner.

"And which of you are after her?"

Crayner sniggered.

"I wouldn't have her with twenty thousand," said honest old Howker, with a spasmodic burst; "she'll never be the woman Miss Crooze is!"

"Ah!" said Don Sancho de Saumarez.

"Goodness sake! Mr. Merripebbles, this has been an awful night."

"Awful, my dear! I'm sure Mr. Howker was most agreeable (though he does not dress like a gentleman; his pumps were not what we might have expected), and the stories of Don Sancho!—what is his name? My memory is getting worse and worse."

"Your memory, indeed, Mr. Merripebbles; it must be bad, to go dancing Sir Roger de Coverley, and making little jokes when poor Mr. Everard Lynch is lying on his death bed."

"But, my dear, I never saw Mr. Everard Lynch."

"Nor I either. But I've heard of him"—and the

changeable face of Mrs. Merripebbles became sad and compassionate—"I've heard of him after he'd married his cousin, and her father turned them out of doors. I've heard of him begging day after day at her brother Gregory's door (why on earth Mr. Merripebbles you could allow me to ask such a man to the party, I can't imagine; but it's just like you). I've heard of him striking Gregory to the earth, when he was half famished, for reviling his dead wife—Gregory's own sister! I've heard of him—half in rags—all clever poet, painter, musician as he was—dragging himself and his little baby boy to that grave in St. Michael's churchyard—Get your Bible, Mr. Merripebbles."

Merripebbles got his Bible.

"Maud Carlton, you spoiled worldling that you are; Lucy Lynch, you little helpless puppet (God knows what will become of you!), come to prayers. Where's that old wretch Elspeth?—look after the whiskey. Let us all try and be better. Mr. Merripebbles read a chapter—and God forgive us!"

There can be no harm, reader, in hoping that you have not more on your conscience requiring Divine forgiveness than had good warmhearted Mrs. Merripebbles, or in stating that Merripebbles read a chapter at his wife's bidding, devoutly and unquestioning, just as he would have danced a hornpipe (or at all events tried it) if called upon by the same authority, believing that all she ordered was for the best.

"Good night, Lucy."

"Good night, Maud, dear."

"Kiss me again; I love you, Lucy."

"I know you do, Maud; but I wish you loved more people."

"Do you? I don't. Besides, there are very few people I could love, if I tried."

"I think there are very few people I could not love for something or other."

"Mr. Howker, in his pumps, for instance; or that chattering mountebank rope-dancer, with his lies and spangles?"

"Mr. Howker seemed very good-humoured and obliging. But now you mention it, Maud, I didn't like the Mexican gentleman, and I don't think that I could."

"Kiss me again, Lucy, and go to sleep."

MARSTON LYNCH

CHAPTER III.

THE MORNING AFTER, AND ITS EVENTS.

AND now I confess to being in a dilemma as how I am to proceed with my story. Do not crow, reader, with premature exultation at the idea of my breaking down at the commencement of my third chapter. I am not going to break down at all. The story is all right—take my word for it. I know perfectly well what is going to become of everybody. I could explain Don Sancho de Saumarez—at a moment's notice, if necessary—down to the nethermost root of his family tree. I have got the death warrant of my villain (by the way, you don't know what he is yet) ready made out. I know every trial and hardship my hero and heroine (you don't know who they are either) have to go through, and how they are to do it. I could tell you what will be the fate of Miss Carlton's fortune, much better than I could if that desirable possession were actually at my disposal. The particulars of Howker's wedding—which is not expected to come off before the very last chapter—I have all before me, down to the very shoe-strings of the bridegroom!

But the question—how to make use of the immense mass of material in my possession? How shall I tell my story? Shall I be dramatic and conversational, or descriptive and analytical? Shall I be graphic and detailed

like A, or suggestive and tantalising like B? Shall I imitate C's short sentences, or D's long sermons? Shall I dilute my single glass of wine in a gallon of water like E, or condense my haunch of venison into a single lozenge like F? I am new to the business, and wish to do my best. I have already received abundance of good advice, and much wholesome chastening. One great authority accuses me of being "wilfully smart." I plead guilty to the adverb—hoping the result may justify the adjective. Another brands me as a cockney ;—him I at once disarm by the confession that I was born in Little St. Thomas the Apostle's, about five-and-twenty yards from Bow Church steeple—so what can he expect? A third advises me strongly not to be funny: that gentleman had better wait till he comes to my murder scene. A fourth (I need hardly say in the columns of a Scotch journal) recommends me to read the novels of Sir Walter Scott before attempting to write one myself. But I have read them!

Perhaps, after all, my best plan will be to tell my story in my own way, if I have a way of my own; or if not, in any body else's that lends itself to the subject. It may occur to the reader that a still better plan would have been to do so without making a fuss about it. Thanking the reader most cordially for the suggestion, I will act upon it, and proceed—merely premising that having taken up my literary quarters in Ash Grove, I feel very comfortable in that locality, and have no intention of leaving it till I feel my credit in the neighbourhood quite exhausted.

The Row was terribly "used up" on the morning after the party. Howker going to town by the nine o'clock 'bus (I assure you he called it so) was a dismal sight. Had he walked to town in the pumps—the subject of such execration on the preceding evening—retaining the limp white cravat and damaged shirtfrill, he could not have looked worse. He was yellow, sir, and despondent. He had not the courage to glance up at Miss Crooze's closely-curtained window. Visions of reduced salary haunted him. He doubted the solvency of his employers. He envied a

sportive pig wallowing in the mud of the unbuilt side of the Grove. The blue dots of his beard were ghastly to behold.

'Twas not much better with Albert Crayner, who, belonging to a more genteel, though less lucrative, house of business, had an extra matutinal hour in which to recruit himself. The ten o'clock vehicle was his means of transit. Fortified with much hot coffee, and the delusive fallacy of a very stiff collar (as yet "all rounders" were not) he was enabled to enter on his daily labours with a degree of forced and unnatural buoyancy. But it fell through in no time, and he became an object of pity to the very messengers.

Miss Crooze breakfasted in bed. Care of the morning school was entrusted to Miss Fanshawe, the assistant governess, also a late guest at the party, though not previously mentioned. Miss Fanshawe being over-indulged, like every other member of the establishment—the superior's reputed strong mind notwithstanding—preferred sleep in Miss Crooze's arm chair to hearing lessons. The result was anarchy—the arch-spirit of turbulence being represented by Polly Bickerstaff, the "limb" of Grove House—to such an extent, as to call forth repeated raps at the wall from Mrs. Murke, next door, whose dissipation had flown to her right shoulder, and laid her up as a permanency. The effect upon Mr. Murke is of no more consequence than any other event in the life of that negative personage.

Whatever may have been his success as an evening's amusement, Don Sancho de Saumarez certainly did not bear the morning's reflection of Ash Grove generally. Viewed through the distorting glass of jaded nerves and deranged livers, he was seen to lamentable disadvantage. The Miss Crayners, over their mortifying breakfast, at which meal they presented an attenuated lank appearance, not insuggestive of a damaged pair of stockings hung out to dry, pronounced him unhesitatingly—an Englishman. The force of censure could scarcely go further. Mr. Tofts having exhausted all such minor causes of quarrel—as weak

tea, tough toast, &c.—with his sister and housekeeper, was delighted at the opportunity of that young lady speaking favourably of the Don, to annoy her by stigmatising him, at once, as a “play actor.”

Mrs. Rufflestone's mamma—doubtless, a judge of such matters—feared the Don would turn out to be nothing but a clever impostor. In what important degree he had imposed on Mrs. Rufflestone's mamma, the writer has no means of ascertaining. The family breakfast of the Merripebbles establishment was conducted in gloomy silence. Mrs. Merripebbles was wretched and remorseful, and she always gave the tone to the household. The principle of repentance for having enjoyed ourselves in an innocent manner may be looked upon as a purely English invention.

Altogether Ash Grove was in the seediest possible condition [the editor took me to task last month about my “slang:” I assured him I was only a little in advance of my age: in a few years “seedy” will be incorporated with the dictionary], and the reputation of Don Sancho de Saumarez at the lowest possible ebb, when the sound of hoofs at full gallop was heard entering the Grove. Every head, not absolutely enveloped in a night-cap, was at the window. To the astonishment of everybody, Don Sancho himself, dressed, not as a Mexican, but as an English nobleman (at all events according to the notion of that character in Ash Grove) was seen galloping past on a magnificent blood mare.

The sensation he had created on the previous evening was eclipsed and forgotten. His hat, boots, gloves, whip, saddle—everything—were faultless. He went up in the market immediately, and stood, in the estimation of the Row, it is impossible to say how much per cent. higher than ever.

He pulled up at Number Eight with a rush, and rang the bell eagerly. Old Elspeth appeared, enjoying a promenade breakfast of bread and cold turkey, which she seemed in no hurry whatever to finish.

"Now then, old lady," said the Don, sharply; "open the gate—I'm in a hurry."

"Save us!" exclaimed the old woman, recognising the voice, and gaping with astonishment. "If it is-na the braw callant o' yestreen, that sang the sangs—an' o' em Robbie Burns's, too, an' in gude Scotch—an' a' horse-back!"

"Come, come, let me in, will you."

The Mexican sprang from his charger, and secured the bridle to the railings. The old woman proceeded to open the gate, by no means hurrying herself, and making admiring comments upon the stranger's personal appearance as she did so.

"The braw claes o' him!—the trews and the patent shoon! 'Deed, Sir, ye'll play the deel wi' the lasses mair in this dress than the ither. But I aye tauld them a' ye were o' the recht sort."

"Well, never mind that," said the Don, with good-humoured impatience, "I must see your master."

"Then ye'll just hae to gang back to Longport. He's gane tilt the office. And the gloves, too!—like the verra snaw! Staun up till I look at you."

"Pshaw, nonsense! Your mistress, then."

"Well, ye can see her. She's big enoo. But ye'll no see her as she was yestreen. Ye'll hae nae smiles and satin the day. It's a' gingham an' groanin'. And the bonnie black coat, too! The recht sort, sirs! The recht sort! but I tauld them so."

And with such marks of patronage and approval, the old woman preceded the stranger to the house, occasionally stopping to turn him deliberately round for inspection, and smooth his garments, as if he were a pet animal, always referring to her original conviction of his belonging to the "recht sort."

Mrs. Merripebbles was lingering over her untasted meal, in company with her daughter and the young girl who had been addressed on the previous evening as Lucy Lynch, when Don Sancho was introduced. His visit appeared to cause

more surprise than pleasure to the lady of the house, whose innate good breeding, however (is the phrase a bull or not?), secured him a polite reception. He was requested to be seated.

"There seems to be a fatality," said the Don, after an interchange of salutations, in which he had singled out Miss Carlton for marked attention, who, however, barely returned his civility; "there seems a fatality that I should intrude upon your family circle at the most unseasonable time. But when you learn the business that has brought me, you will excuse it."

"I think," said the Don, looking round, after a short pause, "what I have to communicate had better be to you alone. I am greatly pressed for time, and if these young ladies will pardon me"—

"Maud and Lucy Lynch—go up to the nursery."

The two girls left the room.

"Mr. Gregory Lynch's daughter, I presume?" the Don inquired, catching at the name.

"No, poor thing. I wish she was. His step daughter only. But she is very little older than his own children, and we call her Lynch, perhaps to make her believe that she has a father. Heaven knows she wants one! But I am detaining you, sir. Pray proceed with your business?"

"I am the bearer of bad news. Mr. Everard Lynch died last night!"

"When we were rioting and dancing. Good heavens forgive us!" And Mrs. Merripebbles groaned.

"That, however, is not the object of my visit, for which, to tell you the truth, I could ill spare the time. You are related to the family of the deceased, I believe?"

"Distantly—but no matter the degree. Yes."

"Then I have, no doubt, done right in coming here. It appears there was a painful scene at his brother-in-law's, when the death took place."

"How so?"

"Why the poor man's son, young Marston Lynch, whom you know, of course—"

"I have never seen him."

"An excitable, impetuous, soft-hearted fellow; only eighteen, or he'd know better. It seems there have been family differences—"

"There have, indeed. I hope Gregory Lynch will be forgiven."

"Not by my young friend Marston, certainly. I will be as brief as I can. The father, feeling himself dying, insisted on his being taken to his relation's house, with a view to making peace and securing a protector for his son. The boy opposed this strongly, but gave in to his sick father's wishes. No sooner, however, was the breath out of the poor man's body, than the lad—half mad, no doubt, poor fellow!—the father and son were greatly attached to each other—flew into a paroxysm, declared that his father's corpse should not remain in the house of the man who had killed his mother."

"He did kill her! he did! he did!" said Mrs. Merri-
pebbles, sobbing convulsively.

"He was for carrying it away by main force; and I believe he would have done so if his strength had not been expended by long fatigue and watching. As it was, he shut himself up with the body till daybreak, and then sent for me."

"Why for you?"

"I don't know; probably because I had taken a fancy to him on board ship, and he could think of no nearer friend in his trouble. I was on the point of starting for London; my family affairs are very pressing; but I could not, of course, resist such a summons. I found him very much broken, but perfectly calm and firm in his determination to remove the body immediately—to a workhouse, he said, if necessary. I tried to reason with him, but soon saw it would be as useless as cruel to do so in his present state. He attributes to his uncle the death, not only of his mother but his father, who had been driven to the unsettled harrassing life that ultimately killed him, by the persecutions of his family. The kindest thing seemed to

me to humour him in his fancy, bad or good. I saw the uncle. To do him justice, he seemed very much distressed himself, and expressed every sympathy for the boy, whose violent conduct seemed more to grieve than incense him."

"A canting hypocrite!" Mrs. Merripebbles broke in.

"However, the lad will not hear of any assistance from that quarter. I promised to aid him in carrying out his wishes, whatever they might be, so far as my means would allow. I should impress upon you that there is no stronger tie between us than that of fellow passengers," added the Don, with a deprecating wave of the hand at the allusion to his own humanity.

"Then God bless you for it, whoever you are," said Mrs. Merripebbles, drowned in tears, and her massive frame quivering with emotion. "The boy was right; God bless him for his truth to his parent's memory! He was right! It would have been desecration to leave the poor corpse in that house. You did well to come to me, sir; I thank you for it. I am only a distant relation, but no matter! The boy shall not want a mother while I live. I have money of my own. I don't care that for what Mr. Merripebbles says. He shall have a home here. His poor father shall be buried from a friend's house, not from his murderer's. I am very much obliged to you, indeed, I will fetch them myself, the dead and the living."

And Mrs. Merripebbles rang the bell, sobbing convulsively.

Elsbeth appeared immediately, not even making a feint to conceal the fact that she had been listening at the door, and was despatched for a fly.

Don Sancho looked at his excited hostess with a queer studious expression, in which, however, honest admiration formed a prominent ingredient.

"My dear madam," he said, "I am glad to see that my poor young friend—we knock up friendships at sea in no time—has met with so kind a protectress. But my chief object in coming to you was to suggest the smoothing away of difficulties between him and his relation."

"No: Mrs. Merripebbles would not hear of it. The lad should not be dependent on the destroyer of his parents."

"But I fear his father has left him in a most helpless condition."

"He shall come here; he can assist Mr. Merripebbles in his business. We will get him a situation."

"Then, in that case, I leave the matter in your hands, and must really attend to my own interests, which I repeat are very pressing; indeed, if I had not seen that blood mare for sale in the stable of my hotel, I doubt if I could possibly have spared the time. Only one thing remains, for me to do."

And the Don placed in the hands of Mrs. Merripebbles a crisp, crackling new twenty-pound note.

"It's very little," he said apologetically, "not worth mentioning; but I am an extravagant man, and at present an embarrassed man. The claims on my purse are numerous. It is all I can do for him. You are more fit to take care of it than he is, and it may help to lighten present expenses. He need never know where it came from."

"God bless you again, for a true Christian," said Mrs. Merripebbles, sobbing afresh. "But you will have your reward."

"Pshaw, my dear madam—do not exaggerate trifles—I must really go—if I leave my new mare tugging any longer at your railings she'll cut her mouth to pieces. Tut! I had nearly forgotten."

Don Sancho stopped, as if struck by a sudden recollection—

"In the chances of life," he began, in a tone of some sadness, "it is more than probable that we shall never meet again."

"Pray do not say so."

"Whether or not, I shall never forget the pleasant welcome I received to a land I consider almost my own, in my cordial reception by a charming family circle to whom I was utterly unknown. Hurried as I was this

morning, I wished to bring with me a slight memorial of the stranger you were so kind as to treat as a friend. Permit me."

The Don produced from a small parcel some exquisite specimens of Mexican feather work and wax figures; also a richly embroidered fan, on which sparkled a few jewels of value.

"Mere toys!" slightly he said, "and of no value whatever; but if you will keep these on your mantelpiece and request your charming daughter to use the fan occasionally—merely in remembrance of a grateful bird of passage—they are not worth thanks I assure you. By the way, our young friend has my London address in case I can at any time be of service to him. I promise nothing. My own means, as I have told you, are limited; but I have friends."

"You deserve them," sighed Mrs. Merripebbles.

"Don't be too sure of that—the mare will positively have your railings down. My dear madam, once for all, I wish you all health and happiness."

Mrs. Merripebbles first seized his hand, then kissed it; then, unable to control the grateful emotions of her nature, literally hugged him in her arms and kissed him on both cheeks, blushing as she did so, and murmuring in apology—

"I might be your mother, you know. God send that my own boy may grow up as good and handsome—as mindful of his fellow creatures in their misfortunes!"

Don Sancho de Saumarez tore himself away: brushed something from his eyes with the back of his glove; released the mare from her bondage; and vaulted into the saddle like an acrobat. The entire Row was on the watch for his re-appearance. Mrs. Rufflestone, reckless of conventionalities, rushed out at the front door in an intolerable state of deshabelle, and for want of a better signal, brandished a twin at the flying stranger in token of adieu. The Miss Crayners peered at him through the muslin window curtain. Elspeth, returning from the fly expedition, hailed his appearance with a wild *pas d'extase*—pro-

bably a Highland fling or a Strathspey. The Don threw her a splendid gratuity, upon which she uttered a Gaelic yell, to the temporary discomfiture of the mare. A dozen small female noses were flattened against Miss Crooze's schoolroom window. The Don flew past them all, and at the top of the road, splashed from head to foot, young Mr. Tofts, who was waiting for the eleven o'clock omnibus.

The horse and rider were soon out of sight. And thus the brilliant apparition of Don Sancho de Saumarez disappeared from the horizon of Ash Grove, leaving a reputation behind him like that of a comet.

"Mamma," said Maud Carlton, as her parent was getting into the fly on her impetuous errand of humanity, "Elspeth has told me all about this business. I know what you are going to do. You will be sorry for it."

"You heartless, spoiled creature, what do you mean?"

"Not what you mean, Mamma"—there was an unusual gentleness in Miss Carlton's manner. "But you give way to your feelings and then repent it. You will make this poor boy think there is a home for him, and in a few days will be tired of the burden. Don't fly out with me. I only want to say that you have plenty of money of mine, that you have saved for me, as you call it, out of my allowance from the trustees—as if I should ever want it! Pray make use of it in this matter."

Mrs. Merripebbles stared at her queer daughter with the utmost astonishment. She said nothing, but squeezed her in her arms, giving her a loud enthusiastic kiss.

The fly drove off. When Miss Carlton rejoined her companion she displayed signs of moisture about the eyes, which gave her an entirely novel and unprecedented appearance.

CHAPTER IV.

SHORT, BUT IMPORTANT, AS IT INTRODUCES THE HERO.

MORE excitement for Ash Grove ! A funeral and a new resident. Mr. Everard Lynch was buried in St. Michael's Church, Longport, in the very grave to which he had so often led the weeping mourner who followed him to it. After the funeral, Marston Lynch took up his residence as a member of the Merripebbles' family.

His grief at first was so violent and inconsolable as partly to dismay and puzzle his new found friends. On the eve of the funeral Mrs. Merripebbles had said to her husband—

"I declare I don't know what to do with this poor lad. I quite tremble for to-morrow. I have been thinking that it would be better if he had some one with him nearer his own age. He seems very affectionate and grateful for our attention, but we are old people compared to him, and can hardly enter into his feelings; and you know, Mr. Merripebbles, *you'll* be in no state to support anybody to-morrow—you'll be as bad as he."

Merripebbles felt it. He turned white, and quivered at

the idea of the trial in store for his poor old weak nerves and sensitive nature.

"You're quite right, my dear—quite right, as you always are," he faltered, rubbing his forehead with his pocket handkerchief.

"If we knew some nice respectable young man we could ask?"

"To be sure—some nice respectable young man; there is Mr. Tofts, he's a nice young man, and highly respectable."

"Don't be utterly ridiculous, Mr. Merripebbles. Mr. Tofts, indeed! A nice man to call in for sympathy. I would as soon think of looking for it—in—your umbrella," said Mrs. Merripebbles, snatching at the readiest illustration of stiffness and emptiness.

"What do you say to Mr. Albert Crayner?" said Merripebbles, hopelessly, after a pause—not that he had the slightest idea of his suggestions being adopted, but because he felt himself called upon to say something.

"He's a fool, Mr. Merripebbles, and you are another to think of such a thing," was the gracious response. "But what have I been thinking of all the time. There's Mr. Howker; to be sure,—the very man!"

"Mr. Howker—my—dear!" Merripebbles fairly gasped with astonishment. "The very last man I should have thought of."

"Of course, because he is the right one."

"But consider his manners and style of dress."

"Dress, indeed! You do try my patience sometimes. Do you think poor young Mr. Lynch would derive any consolation from being turned loose in a tailor's shop? Mr. Howker has got a heart in his bosom, and that's of more importance than boots."

A little reflection convinced Merripebbles that the instinctive judgment of his wife was, as usual, right. Accordingly Howker was invited to assist at the funeral. He was intensely flattered at the honour so unexpectedly thrust upon him. He came, full of importance, in the

newest and worse fitting suit of mourning imaginable—having obtained a holiday for the purpose.

He performed the office of consoler admirably—more than justifying Mrs. Merripebbles' election. He was a dull, commonplace fellow enough, of limited intellect and attainments; but, fortunately, there are subtle powers of perception in kind and honest natures that lie deeper than the head. Howker appreciated the grief of his young charge perfectly. He was at his side throughout the day—never obtruding himself—never attempting jarring commonplace consolations. When wanted, he was there—when in the way, he made himself invisible. He respected the sufferer's paroxysms, rather encouraging them to have vent than attempting to check them. He did not insult the orphan's sacred privilege of grief, by pretending to equal participation in it—though his eyes were wet all the day. What was wanted he fetched—but he pressed and offered nothing. In a word, he fully understood the deep and beautiful sympathy of silence.

The result of this one day's true service was, that Howker and young Marston Lynch became fast friends. Two characters more dissimilar could scarcely be imagined. We have seen what Howker was, whereas Marston Lynch was a youth of delicate organisation and poetical temperament, with great versatility of talent in a high state of cultivation. A good deal has been written about the "likings of the unlike." The fact that clever people should attach themselves to inferior natures has been considered a phenomenon worthy of various explanatory theories. The glorious democratic principle of the affections is generally here lost sight of. Why do wise and great men love children—or dogs?

In the course of time young Lynch's grief began partially to wear off, and he became a great favourite with the Row. He was tall, tolerably good looking, and well formed, though, as yet, somewhat angular. He was generous, affectionate, and grateful—rather violent at times—but placable in the extreme. He became strongly

attached to his benefactors, as indeed he had cause, for they had treated him, since his calamity, with uniform kindness and affection.

Some weeks had elapsed since his father's death, and nothing had been said with respect to the young man's prospects in life. His host and hostess forbore to allude to the subject from motives of delicacy during his first grief—and it was rather a perplexing feature in their guest's character, that, however grateful for their hospitality, he took it rather as a matter of course, and as a thing to be permanent. Once or twice his uncle, Mr. Gregory Lynch, had made proposals to provide for him, but these he always rejected indignantly. He said he would prefer starving or sweeping the streets. But practically he seemed to prefer good dinners from the Merripebbles' kitchen, and scouring the library, which, for a middle class family, was tolerably extensive. He read incessantly, and frequently spent hours alone in his chamber converting an immense quantity of paper into manuscript, the nature of which he was shy of divulging. He was fond of long walks, either by himself or with Howker, in whom he had established a sort of right and property. On Sundays, or in the lengthened spring evenings, when business was over, his humble friend would accompany him to his parents' grave, where he would sometimes give way to passionate exclamations, sometimes sit in moody silence—during which Howker would retire to a respectful distance, and wait patiently, extinguishing the very cigar he loved, in deference to the solemn scene.

Things were going on in this way, when it became observed that young Lynch was taking more pains than formerly with his personal appearance. His mourning was more carefully brushed, and the Merripebbles' washing bill augmented fearfully. It was mooted abroad that young Lynch was passionately enamoured of Miss Crooze—exactly eleven years his senior.

Nevertheless, young Lynch seemed as far from doing anything towards paying for his washing as ever. His

entertainers were beginning to get uneasy, and a little irritated, when things took an unexpected turn.

A sad calamity happened in the Row. Poor little frivolous Mrs. Rufflestone lost one of her twins, and as nearly broke her heart over it as the demurest matron could have done. It was felt as a common misfortune—for, with all their little scandals and bickerings, the Ash Grove inhabitants were a good simple-hearted race, and there was a kind of family tie between them. Mrs. Merripebbles, who had been sitting up all night with the little sufferer—when all was done, entered her own house bathed in tears.

"It's all over—all over!" she said, "poor little tiny mite! poor little thing!"

Marston Lynch was in an arm chair by the fire, reading Byron. He put his book down. He was a soft-hearted fellow, and he shared the general grief.

"So pretty it looks," said Mrs. Merripebbles—"like a bit of waxwork. Oh! if there was only some one here to take its portrait before it begins to change! It would be such a comfort to the poor little mother."

Marston Lynch started up—

"Do you think so?"

"Do I think so! You wouldn't ask if you were a mother. But it's impossible now. It's too far to send to Longport, and I wouldn't have it done after that beautiful look has left the little face—and it won't last—it won't last."

"I'll do it in ten minutes," said Marston Lynch. And he ran upstairs, returning almost immediately with a flat japanned box in his hand and a small strained canvass.

"Eh, dear! Mr. Marston," said his hostess in astonishment; "Can you paint?"

"To be sure I can."

"Why, who taught you?"

"He who taught me everything I know—that is worth knowing," replied Marston, with a tear in his eye, "my dear father."

"But you have never shown us your powers—"

"It was his box," Marston said in a broken voice: "I hadn't the heart to touch it before: but now I can be the means of doing a service—Let us go at once."

In a few minutes our hero was in the chamber of death; and in less than a quarter of an hour had dashed off what, in the judgment of the simple people around him, was a masterly oil sketch of the little dead cherub. Certainly he had caught the expression most happily and pleasantly. The gratitude of the poor little mother was boundless, and the picture remained in her possession, a treasure, that bales of yellow satin and all the ostrich feathers of the desert could not have purchased from her.

But here was a discovery! Marston Lynch could paint portraits. Mrs. Merripebbles at once resolved to turn it to a business account. All her influence in the Row, and elsewhere, should be employed to procure him sitters. Marston accepted the hint that he was to do something for his living very quietly, and expressed himself ready to begin. A three-quarter portrait of Mrs. Murke was the first commission, and a sitting was duly appointed.

CHAPTER V.

RETROSPECTIVE AND POSSIBLY PROSAIC ; BUT UNFORTUNATELY INDISPENSABLE.

LYNCH—Gregory of the name, not Marston—was a widower. At the period of which we treat he had sustained that disconsolate character for about four years with remarkable fortitude and propriety. A strong party of detractors, of the sentimental way of thinking—(usually headed by Mrs. Merripebbles : though, of course, at the slightest indication of good feeling on the part of the enemy, she would desert to his cause at a moment's notice)—were in the habit of charging him gravely, first, with having married a sickly widow for her money ; and, secondly, with aggravation of the unfortunate lady's sufferings by systematic ill-treatment, with a view to getting her out of the world. That Gregory's keen business habits and an excellent eye to investment may have influenced him somewhat in his matrimonial speculations is more than possible, but there is no reason to believe that the married life of the deceased Mrs. Lynch had been more unhappy than that of a listless commonplace woman must always be when united to a worldly-hearted commonplace man, amidst the dull conventionalities of English middle class society.

Mrs. Lynch had, as above hinted, "brought her hus-

band money." That familiar expression was literally applicable to the case in point, as Mrs. Lynch never saw much of her money again—her lord and master quietly absorbing it with the rest of his possessions, as lawful though inadequate tribute to his great superiority and condescension.

The bereaved gentleman's family consisted of four intolerable children (the eldest boy at a public school), and the step-daughter, of whom the reader has already had a passing glimpse. For this young lady, no provision had been made by her mother, who was indeed legally powerless of affecting, as she would have been morally incapable of proposing, such a thing. The orphan was, therefore, entirely dependent on her step-father, a circumstance of which she was speedily made aware. Gregory Lynch looked upon her as a monster of extortionate encumbrance, and himself a model of benevolence and magnanimity, for allowing her food, clothes, and lodging, together with the privilege of exercising in his mansion the entire duties of housekeeper and nursery governess, and many of those of dressmaker and maid of all work. That the girl was thoroughly well housed, clothed, and fed, and supplied with every necessity of her young existence, with the trifling exception of affection, there can be no doubt; but the latter article was one in which the great commercial house of Gregory Lynch did not deal largely. And the slender stock in the possession of the head of the firm was "wanted for the business."

Longport was proud of Gregory Lynch. It is rather difficult to say why, as his only remarkable achievement in connection with that township had been to cause an immense quantity of its circulating medium to flow into his own pockets, and stop there. But it is surely a refutation of the common charge of want of chivalrous feeling in commercial communities, where every body is trying to get the better of his neighbours, that the men who do not succeed in that desirable experiment profess the most dis-

interested admiration for those who do. Probably it is on the principle that makes a beaten man always speak in exaggerated terms of his victor's strength and prowess. At any rate Gregory Lynch, though not physically prepossessing was an object of admiration and reverence as he walked the streets. "One of our Longport men, sir," struggling insolvents and half-starved clerks would say; "got on entirely by his own exertions. Recollect him when he kept a little peddling haberdasher's shop at the top of the High Street. And look at him now!—one our merchant princes, sir,"—and so on.

It is true there was usually some little romance in these glowing narrations; but some license must be allowed to the imaginative classes. It would completely have spoiled the picture to state, that the little peddling haberdasher's shop at the top of the High Street had done a thriving business in the time even of Gregory Lynch's father, a nice old gentleman, who had served his country during the last war, with a few navy contracts for hosiery, &c.—at a time when the present meddling spirit of prying into public business was unknown, and enterprising speculators (with good introductions) could really hope to turn an honest penny at the cost of the country, by which it is well known certain people are born to be supported. It would also have materially weakened the Gregorian Myth to mention that, as unexpected channels of commerce flowed into the town, the value of household property increased at an incredible ratio, and that the said haberdasher's shop, with a few surrounding tenements, freehold possessions of the Lynches, became a splendid source of income. It was also worth forgetting that in his father's lifetime Gregory Lynch had been a bad son (to a still worse father, it is true), a heartless brother, and a coarse profligate. Should any invidious malcontent rake up those forgotten bygones, the staunch defenders of the Faith in Lynch had always the answer ready—"that young men will be a little wild; and, after all, even in his most dissolute days, nobody can

deny that Gregory was always a capital man of business, and kept an eye to the main chance," which was strictly true, and of course compensated for all failings.

We are all of us liable to commit mistakes. Most of us, in the opinion of certain fatalists, at some one period of our lives, commit a grand and fatal error, the consequences of which will materially influence the remainder of our existence. Such a calamity had happened to Mr. Gregory Lynch in early life. He had committed—an error; which, if discovered, (albeit actuated by that laudable spirit for which we find him so enthusiastically admired, the desire to better himself,) could scarcely have been excused even by his own most ardent supporters on the score of youthful indiscretion. But, fortunately, it had not been discovered; I say fortunately, because, surely, it would have been a pity that so glorious a career should have been injured or prevented by what his admirers would unhesitatingly pronounced—a serious mistake, at its very outset.

Frequent reference has been made to the family feuds by which Gregory Lynch, and his less prosperous relations, were divided. To explain these, a short dissertation on the mysteries of English aristocracy will be necessary.

In mentioning the word aristocracy, do not think, reader, I am about to meddle with the "genuine article," the real *crème de la crème*—to not one member of which I have ever had the privilege of speaking (though there is no telling to what honours a diligent literary career, conducted on principles of becoming deference, may not lead me). What I wish to allude to is an indefinable spirit that descends, as it were, like an exhalation from the unapproachable realms above, pervading and influencing English society down to its very dregs. Have you never known people with no clearly ascertained grandfathers—(not that I place any particular stress on that family luxury: I have known people who never had grandfathers, or at best very bad ones, attain to, and not absolutely disgrace, the highest positions)—have you not heard such

people talk with complacency about the "family," and rejoice in being a "Smith," a "Brown," a "Slogginson," or a "Powler," as the case may be? Have you never known shopkeepers—(I mean, of course, reader, in your capacity of moral philosopher and student of character; I assure you it is only by such means I have ever been brought into contact with such people) staring, as it were, their shop-fronts out of countenance—ignoring their very existence—and "cutting" other shopkeepers for being "in trade!" Is it a case impossible of occurrence for a confectioner to cast his daughter off for ever, for bringing disgrace on the family by marrying a baker? Can you tell me why it is so much more respectable to be a "commission agent" than a linen-draper—a clerk at a pound a week, than a shopman at two? Can you explain to me by what Brahmin-like *lex non scripta* it shall be honourable to sell wine, and disgraceful to sell boots or trousers—and, as an inner question, why the sale of trousers should involve less contamination than that of boots? Finally, could you ever satisfactorily account for the moral scruples of the decayed gentlewoman in Douglas Jerrold's story, who, though reduced to gain a livelihood by selling apples in the gallery of Drury-lane Theatre, had the feelings of a born lady about her, and "would die rather than take in the cat's meat?" And did you ever for a moment doubt that old apple-woman to be the very type and *epitome* of English humbug and pretension?

The Lynches, of High Street, Longport, the haberdashery connection notwithstanding, aspired to "family" honours. Old Lynch, in the intervals of leisure afforded by his arduous pursuits of swindling the country, and driving tight bargains with African captains (we are speaking of the very good old times when the nuisance of a Man and a Brother was unknown) was accustomed to solace himself with sight of a certain family tree, designed on parchment, as having its root in the gastric regions of a mail-clad Norman warrior: its latest remarkable fruit being one Timothy Lynch, who was marginally observed

to have "sold ye estate." The Lynches had also a crest, which was duly graven on the very first teaspoon the family fortunes afforded. Of the genuineness of these heraldic pretensions I am no judge. I do not attach the importance to such matters that some popular writers do; having studied literature rather as an art *per se*, than as a pendant to the noble science of coach-painting.

At any rate, when Gregory Lynch's sister fell in love with, and married, against her father's wishes, a distant relation, belonging to a despised and outcast branch of the family (it is impossible to say why),—a man, moreover, who had the additional stigma of a tendency to the fine arts, who was clever at anything but earning a livelihood, having, at an average, a dozen schemes per week, for making his fortune and regenerating society,—the sort of man, in fact, who never ought to marry at all, but who always does marry early in life to the most unsuitable partner that can be met with—when this unholy alliance took place, the indignation of the family knew no bounds. The door was shut upon the offending couple for ever. Mr. Lynch, senior, was understood to have heaped the most fearful imprecations on their devoted heads. Mr. Lynch, junior, was implacable in his resentment. The unhappy bridegroom was always spoken of as "that scoundrel,"—"that fellow,"—"that scum," and so forth. Every opportunity to ruin his prospects in life was taken advantage of; and of such opportunities rich men, in a provincial town, will find no scarcity to exercise over a poor enemy. Mr. Lynch, senior, had never been remarkable for paternal tenderness, nor his son for any striking amount of brotherly affection. The facility with which both dismissed daughter and sister from their thoughts (except to swear at her occasionally) may be taken as an indication that their rage was not excited on the principle of the tigress bereft of her young. That their nearest relation might die of want for anything they cared, they proved practically—by allowing her to do so.

And yet no name or punishment in their opinion was

sufficiently bad for Everard Lynch, for the crime of running away with a daughter of the house he had already disgraced by being connected with, however remotely. There was no moral objection to Everard Lynch. He was a gentleman in breeding—and of far higher education than anybody bearing his name. Mere poverty could not have been his crime, for he had many available abilities that, with the slightest assistance (which would have been readily afforded to a favoured suitor,) might easily have been employed in a profitable direction. But on the inexplicable Brahmin-like principle of caste I have alluded to, the marriage was considered derogatory; and the haberdasher's family of High Street, Longport, were as much scandalised by the union of their daughter with a scholar and a gentleman (not the latter perhaps, according to the code of my talented friend Gules Fitz Plush, of the *Weekly Panel and Coachpainters' Magazine*) as a ducal house would be at the elopement of one of its female scions with a curate.

The young wife died—a very young wife indeed—if not absolutely from direct want, in consequence of a life of hardship and privation she had been neither framed nor taught to bear. The husband wandered in various parts of the world in pursuit of divers *ignis fatui* of fortune.

The father's death took place soon after that of his daughter. His end was a wretched one—aggravated by much heartless disobedience on the part of the son he had so cherished and trained in his own worldly image. It was indeed said, in his latter days, that to such a pitch of exasperation had his son's ill-concealed and impatient cupidity for the succession wrought him, that he vowed to leave the latter without a penny, bequeathing all his possessions to the child of the daughter whom, in his maudlin penitence, he was in the habit of deploring he had so ill-treated.

However, as quarrels between the father and son were of no unfrequent occurrence, the threat was looked on as an idle one, which, it would seem, proved to be the case.

The old sinner died intestate: Gregory inherited the already snug property; sowed his coarse wild oats; and proceeded to employ his wealth in the glorious manner which won for him golden opinions from all sorts of people—at least from all sorts of people in Longport.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH A PERSON BY THE NAME OF BROWN
HONOURS GREGORY LYNCH WITH A VISIT.

GREGORY LYNCH lived in a very large, very square, very new house, in a suburb of Longport, much more convenient and aristocratic (the adjectives generally go together) than Ash Grove, and proportionably expensive. The mansion, which was of a cold, moist, grey complexion, externally composed of a material strongly resembling frozen putty, had been facetiously mentioned in the architect's bill as a building in the Italian school, and was as much like a Venetian or Florentine palace as Gregory Lynch, the merchant prince, and Mayor of Longport *in posse*, was like Lorenzo de Medici, or the Doge of Venice.

"Huskisson Lodge," as Mr. Lynch had baptised his residence in honour of a statesman whose *manes* would scarcely feel flattered by the compliment, was rather remarkable for a presence of plate glass, shining mahogany, strong boundary walls, and wire fences, coupled with an absence of trees, flowers, comfort, and geniality, than for anything else. And in this respect, even, it was scarcely remarkable, being so very like its neighbours.

About ten days after the death of his kinsman, the master

of Huskisson Lodge came home to dinner. Gregory Lynch dined at home usually, not from choice, but necessity. There were no clubs in Longport as yet, and to dine in the taverns and restaurants of the town—good accommodation enough for clerks and salesmen—would be *infra dig.* Certainly the house of Gregory Lynch was no particular attraction to him. Its dearest inmates were three children of tender years, the offspring of a wife he never particularly cared about. His housekeeper was an overtaxed child whom he hated, as we always hate those whom we have injured. The establishment generally he looked upon as a mere source of expenditure, undertaken to satisfy the exigences of society. Unless he had a dinner party of satellites, before whom he could display his wealth and boast of his successes, Gregory Lynch, under his own roof, was miserable.

He was very miserable that evening, after a solitary, ill-cooked, and pompously-served dinner. He had been strangely depressed ever since the unexpected appearance and death of his kinsman; so much so, as to lead to the postponement, at his own request, of certain negotiations for municipal honours to which he aspired. This, however, told in his favour. Though the affections are not usually at a high premium on the Longport Exchange, still, when a man has performed the first essential duty in life, that of making a fortune, it is customary to apply the Biblical maxim of "to him that hath shall be given," in a manner peculiar to Longport, and such like communities. Accordingly, every note in the musical *repertoire* of Fame having been repeated *ad nauseam*, on the trumpet of that popular instrumentalist in "the regular way of business," it was a pleasant variation to find that Gregory Lynch, in addition to his recognised merits, was a model of affectionate brothers and inconsolable relations in general. When to this was added the knowledge that the kinsman, whose loss the hero so much deplored, had been, when alive, his most implacable enemy, and had injured him in the dearest chambers of his heart, and that moreover the

dead man's son had, with unchristian malignity and ingratitude, rejected overtures of friendship from the all-merciful Gregory, the town was fully prepared to see that saint-like gentleman appear some fine morning on the dome of the Exchange in wings and robes of shining light, and vanish upward into that firmament his unearthly nature so fitted him to adorn.

Gregory Lynch finished his dinner and a bottle of excellent port, and wheeled his easy chair to the front of a blazing fire. But neither wine nor fire seemed to warm or cheer him. His dining-room was furnished to perfection—with every contrivance for comfort that mechanical ingenuity could suggest. Better curtains, chairs, fire-place screens, and door-ways, could not be invented. But it was the corpse of Comfort with the soul absent.

A flippant, conventionally-obsequious, really insolent, female-servant entered the room, and announced—

“A gentleman, Sir,—if you please!”

“I am not at home,” said the master, peevishly; “I told you so.”

“I told him so, Sir; but he says he must see you.”

“His name?”

“Name of Brown, Sir; important business, he says, Sir; more important to you than to him, Sir; so he said, Sir.”

Gregory tried to smile contemptuously, but the expression died away from his lips, and gave way to one of pain and indecision. He stirred the fire petulantly, and bit his nails. Then, as if his thoughts were too oppressive, he said, with a species of desperate indifference—

“Show him in—I will see him!”

Do you believe in presentiments, reader? I do. And could explain them to you on the most material grounds, if I were writing a metaphysical treatise instead of a story. At any rate, Gregory Lynch had a presentiment about Brown which was not an agreeable one. He tried to dissemble it.

"Some begging-letter fellow," he muttered to himself, when the girl had left the room. "Some schemer—somebody in want of sixpence, with a plan to put thousands in my pocket. The old story, of course—the old story. I shall soon get rid of him!"

He kept repeating this like a chorus, as if to persuade himself that his words were the echo of his feelings; but on the appearance of Mr. Brown he glanced up at that visitor with a feverish eagerness of inquiry—strangely at variance with his assumed indifference.

It took some time to see whom or what Mr. Brown was like. In the first place he was enveloped in a shaggy, pilot coat, almost the very worst for wear; a "wide-awake" hat was drawn closely over his eyes, while his nose and mouth were concealed in the numerous folds of a worsted comforter. He carried a very thick stick; and if Mr. Gregory Lynch had ever seen that charming domestic drama of the "Wreck Ashore" (a rational treat which it is more than probable his tastes had never led him to indulge in), he would have been strongly reminded of one or more of the numerous truculent personages of the piratical persuasion who pervade that best of all unassuming dramatic compositions.

Gregory Lynch attempted to put on his grand reception look, and to overawe Brown at the very threshold. But he had evidently mistaken his man. Brown shut the door; looked round the room as if he had bought it; nodded to its tenant with hasty condescension; drew a chair to the fire, threw off his hat and coat, and proceeded to unroll himself from the comforter, like a self-acting mummy.

"Cold, isn't it?" said Mr. Brown, stopping at the third fold to warm his hands.

Gregory Lynch, under ordinary circumstances, would doubtless have replied, without attempting a joke (an art in which he did not excel), that it certainly was cool. But he was too much interested in watching the countenance, gradually being disclosed to his gaze, to be even accidentally facetious.

Brown, having thoroughly warmed his extremities, divested himself entirely of his woollen swathing band, which he tossed into his hat. He then wheeled suddenly round in his chair, striking an apparently studied attitude, and stared at Gregory Lynch, with the evident intention of startling and discountenancing that gentleman. He succeeded triumphantly.

For the countenance with those keen black eyes, looking into the very depths of whatever soul Gregory Lynch possessed, was one that had haunted his dreams for several nights. He had never seen the face, or one like it, but once, and then only for a few seconds. But he had seen it in an evil moment; its owner had come upon him like a bird of ill-omen—a bearer of troublous tidings—and the face and form had ever since been present in visions of impending calamity, that had weighed upon him—soaring above all others, like—well, for want of a better illustration, like the demon with spreading wings, which my friend Kenny Meadows invariably introduces into his pictures when he is hard up for a background.

The visitor was either the brother of Don Sancho de Saumarez, or the Don himself, sadly in want of shaving, and disguised as a long-shore ruffian. The latter proved to be the case.

"We are quite alone, I suppose?" said the *soi disant* Mr. Brown, poking the fire, with the air of a man who intends changing his coal merchant on the following morning.

"We are certainly alone," replied Gregory, recovering himself a little, and attempting to be stiffly repellent. "But I should like to know what has procured me the distinguished honour—"

"Tut, never mind that sort of thing." The visitor waved his hand impatiently. "My time is precious. You recognise me, I perceive. Only, have the kindness to call me Brown, in case of interruptions. I have particular reasons for concealing my real name."

"Doubtless," observed Gregory, with a grim smile.

"One reason," said the Don, sharply resenting the in-

tended sarcasm, "may be, that I do not consider it altogether creditable to be seen in intimate relations with a man like yourself."

The face of Gregory Lynch became as red as the wattles of a turkey-cock. But the fire of his visitor's eyes appeared to exercise an almost instantaneous power of bleaching. To use an appropriate commercial image, the countenance of the Longport merchant turned from turkey red to a very coarse specimen of calico sheeting.

The visitor seemed to feel his ascendancy, and like it.

"There!" he said cheerfully, "we have something else to do than to bandy sarcasms. My name and position matter little except to save time. If you perfectly understand who I am—a Mexican nobleman of English education—in the constant habit of travelling between the two countries, you will at once perceive that I am liable to be made the agent of communications (especially having a rather troublesome reputation for a good nature) between English residents in Mexico and their friends—or the contrary, as the case may be."

"Proceed, sir."

"I must do so, and speedily, as my time is short. Paul Donovan died in Vera Cruz, on the 10th of last April. I was with him."

Gregory Lynch appeared to swallow an unseen pill of large dimensions. He got it down, however, and resumed his composure, only displaying symptoms of incipient strangulation after the effort.

"And pray, sir," he faltered slowly, with a very helpless attempt at indifference, "Mr. Brown—or whatever you wish to be called—in what manner can the death of your friend—"

"I beg your pardon," the visitor interrupted with his habitual quickness, "*Your* friend, if you have no objection. He was my friend long ago, when he was a gentleman and a man of honour. I need not say that was at a period before he had known you, and become a scoundrel."

Gregory Lynch started up fiercely, and moved towards the bell.

"What are you going to do?" inquired the visitor deliberately, taking out a cigar case.

"To have you turned out of my house."

"Pooh, nonsense! sit down; you know you are not going to do anything of the kind."

Mr. Brown lit a very pale-looking fragrant cigar, which he proceeded to smoke with much enjoyment.

His prediction proved thoroughly correct. Mr. Lynch did not ring the bell, but returned slowly to his seat, much like a beaten hound, with a determination to bite his chastiser at the first opportunity.

"That's better," said Don Sancho. "And now let us come to business. I perceive you perfectly understand the subject of that which has brought me here, though you will be rather surprised at the turn it has taken?"

"I perfectly understand," retorted Gregory, with a courageous effort, "that you have come upon some errand of conspiracy or extortion."

"Worse, my dear sir, worse," said Mr. Brown, sucking his cigar luxuriantly. "I have come here to compound a felony."

"Then, in that case, I think a police-officer is the fittest person to listen to you."

And Gregory made another feeble movement towards the bell.

Don Sancho smoked impassably, his hands thrust into his pocket with Yankee-like freedom. Gregory Lynch returned to his seat again without having rung the bell.

"Now, you know perfectly well this is all nonsense," said the visitor, in a playful argumentative tone. "My time is really precious, and you had much better hear what I have to say quietly."

"True, sir, true." Gregory Lynch rubbed his hands and tried to laugh pleasantly. "You are right. As yet I should have but a very slender case against you: merely obtruding on my privacy and saying rude things is no

particular crime in the eyes of the law. I thank you for the suggestion. You shall have plenty of rope, sir. I am perfectly prepared to hear anything you may have to say."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Perfectly."

Don Sancho whistled a few bars of a Spanish air; paid particular attention to the ash of his cigar; took out his watch, which was a very handsome gold one, secured by a massive chain; and performed a few other trivialities in the airiest conceivable manner. Then he suddenly resumed his basilisk air, and, looking Gregory Lynch full in the eyes, said, in a distinct and measured tone—

"I have your father's real will in my pocket."

If the pill Mr. Gregory Lynch was supposed to have swallowed a few minutes ago had been an ignited bomb-shell, and had just exploded, he could scarcely have displayed stronger indications of an internal shock.

Don Sancho appeared to possess the faculty of following up an advantage in the most dramatic manner. He rose from his seat, and ere his host could falter out a word, seized the latter by the arm, and continued rapidly, in a hissing voice—

"Yes, the will, leaving all the money on which you have built your fortune to your nephew, Marston Lynch—a will dictated by envy, hatred, and malice, unquestionably, for which its framer is no doubt suffering at present, but a legal will nevertheless. Your accomplice, Donovan, drew it up, and, as you believe, sold it you; that is the mistake of scoundrels trusting each other. Fortunately for honest people they are obliged to. You look surprised. What was the price you paid your legal friend for giving you the will to destroy? The means to escape the country. And what for? To evade the consequences of a felony. What was that felony? A clever forgery. He who can forge once can forge twice. At any rate the document which Donovan gave you as your father's will was a forgery. You doubt it. Would you like to look at the original?"

Here it is—don't try to snatch it, there's a good fellow."

But ere the last sentence was well spoken, Mr. Gregory Lynch *had* tried to snatch the document displayed before him with something like fiendish avidity. But his head, as it bent over the table, nearly touched the barrel of a pistol which Don Sancho de Saumarez, with a pleasant smile, pointed at him.

The Don replaced the document in his breast pocket, and, with a gay laugh, snapped the pistol in the air. It was innocent even of a cap.

"I am afraid," he remarked, dryly, "that you are troubled with our old friend the guilty conscience. You are frightened at an unloaded pistol, and dare not give a man in custody who has come to threaten you in your own house armed with murderous weapons. I wish to show you the will to convince you that it was genuine. I perceive that you recognised it as a *fac simile* of that which you destroyed, at once. We understand each other—not perfectly, for you possibly consider me as great a rogue as yourself. Sit still a moment, and I will convince you to the contrary. Do you smoke? I have no wish to treat you as a friend, but I see your wits are rather muddled; and if you are a smoker there is nothing like a cigar."

And the visitor tossed a cigar to his host with a gesture of withering contempt.

Gregory Lynch responded with a coarse imprecation.

"Don't do that," said Mr. Brown, "because in my country we don't allow such liberties, however disgraceful the associates we condescend to mix with. Listen to me. Donovan had preserved the real will—with a view of extorting money from you—and serve you right! This was fourteen years ago; he was then thought consumptive—you hoped he was; but a warm climate saved his life. He turned penitent and religious, in Mexico—always having been a staunch Catholic—got into the hands of the priests, as you would call it, confessed the diabolical scheme

to which he had been party, and the other one he had planned of trading upon the secret. His dying wish was that retribution should be made to young Lynch, if possible. The will he had saved he delivered into the hands of the priests—it may surprise a man of your way of thinking to learn that Catholic priests can be honest men, and honourable gentlemen, No matter! At any rate, they are anxious to carry out the last wishes of their penitent; which I am commissioned to enforce. I have completed my chain of evidence. The genuineness of the will cannot be doubted. And, unless you accede to my propositions, I shall ring your own bell myself, and give you in custody to that force you were so anxious to summon a while ago.”

Gregory Lynch had turned all sorts of colours during the above harangue, which had been delivered with a certain rapid intensity that prohibited all interruptions.

There was a pause, during which Mr. Brown smoked like a lime-kiln.

“Sir,” said Gregory at length, with a dismal attempt at dignified self-possession; “when attacked by a robber, it depends on the sum demanded whether I yield or not. If I have only a few shillings about me, I give them up cheerfully. A larger sum is worth a struggle. Your plan appears tolerably well laid, and calculated to give me some annoyance. May I ask the sum you require for the precious fabrication you have there?”

“Pardon me,” said his visitor dryly. “I have not come here to sell other men’s possessions. I do not part with this will, which is not a fabrication in the sense you make of this word.”

And Mr. Brown hummed the Cachuca to Spanish words.

Gregory Lynch looked at him with a feeling somewhat akin to the admiration with which the unsuccessful tradesmen of Longport were accustomed to regard himself.

“You are a clever man, sir,” he said at length.

“I know it,” was the reply. “You are not.”

"Indeed!"

"No, or you would not have put yourself in my power. Fourteen years ago you must have been at least thirty-three, so that you had not the excuse of youth for making an ass of yourself."

"In a word," said Gregory Lynch, desperately, "what do you require?"

Don Sancho waited till he had finished his tune, and then replied deliberately—

"Two hundred pounds!"

After which he lit a fresh cigar.

"And do you really suppose I am going to give you two hundred pounds unconditionally?"

"I know you are." Don Sancho looked at his watch again; "and you must do it within ten minutes, for I want to catch the London express train. Your cheque will be sufficient."

"I have a good mind to give you a cheque—"

"Of course you have—"

"As an experiment to see whether you will have the hardihood to present it in the morning."

"I shall not be in Longport myself, so you will have to make it payable to the bearer."

Gregory Lynch was a perfect object of pity in his powerless anger:

"And pray—supposing I accede to this demand; in order to save what I consider more than two hundred pounds' worth of annoyance—what guarantee have I that you will not apply to me for more money to-morrow?"

"None whatever. It's your own fault. You shouldn't steal wills. The ten minutes are nearly up. Take the pen at once."

Gregory Lynch had mechanically put his hand in a drawer, and drawn out something which he endeavoured to conceal, as if ashamed of the action. The quick eye of his persecutor detected a cheque-book at a glance.

"Pshaw!" said Gregory, throwing down the pen that

he had unconsciously taken up. "This is mere folly—madness."

"I have no doubt but it will end in that ; but it is your own fault. Look sharp."

"If I refuse."

"You can't. However, understand me thoroughly. I am determined that Marston Lynch shall come to his own. Having the secret in my possession, I sought out the father and son. I found them in New York, and embarked with them in England as an accidental fellow-passenger. I soon discovered that they were not the people to be trusted with the management of their own interests. You, with your superior wealth and coolness, would have got the better of them. I kept my own counsel. Marston Lynch, whom I am proud to call my friend, is a man whom the world will hear of yet. It would not suit my purpose to quarrel with him—certainly not in the interest of a man like you. It would be easy for you to make restitution to him, though the comparatively small inheritance of which you have robbed him has mounted up to something by this time—the houses in High Street that were left to him, are, I know, very valuable property—but if he were aware of the secret, in his present feelings towards you, he would move heaven and earth (I should tell you he has influential friends to back him) to ruin you—a process to which I should not have the slightest objection, only that as I know what English law is—in the meantime he might ruin himself. And, in the meantime also, as I want money for present exigences, I see no more harm in extorting it from you than in skinning a tiger."

"If I refuse," said Gregory Lynch again.

"You will have caused me an expensive journey, much loss of time, and considerable derangement of my plans ; liberties I allow nobody to take with me with impunity."

Gregory Lynch had written a cheque, apparently in a dreamy state of undecided muddle ; but he clutched it reluctantly in his hand.

Don Sancho snatched it from him. Gregory Lynch

started up instinctively as if to dispute the possession. The Don held it out to him airily, between his finger and thumb, saying quietly—

“I took it from you because you had drawn it out for me, and I am in a hurry. If you wish to take it back, here it is. We are not both thieves.”

Gregory Lynch sank heavily in his easy chair, uttering a savage curse.”

“Keep it and be ——,” he muttered—“only mind, don’t let me see your face again. Right or wrong, I fancy it won’t be difficult to make a case against you.”

“You will see me again, I hope frequently,” replied Don Sancho, buttoning up the cheque in his breast pocket, “though the pleasure will certainly not be on my side. Stay, I want something more.”

“Take care,” said Gregory, hoarsely, “you have tried my patience already—”

“I am glad of it. I want the whole of this sum for my own use. But as it is really and truly Marston Lynch’s money, and as I know he must want money himself, I should not feel comfortable in using it, unless I knew his wants were provided for. Send him a cheque for fifty pounds to-morrow. Mind, I rely upon you. My time is up.”

Mr. Brown was by this time re-enveloped in his pilot coat, wideawake, and comforter, and was moving towards the door.

“Stay,” cried Gregory Lynch, throwing off the last feint of independence, and with almost abject submission; “Marston Lynch will have no assistance from me—he would not accept it.”

“True,” replied Don Sancho, stopping. “I forgot that. Give me the cheque; I’ll see that he gets it. Look sharp.”

Lynch obeyed, not merely submissively, but almost gratefully. Mr. Brown pocketed the second cheque, re-kindled his cigar, and darted to the door. There he stopped again.

"To set your mind at ease," he said—using his mesmeric power to its utmost extent—"I may as well tell you, that I shall want you to do me a service that will cost you nothing, but will more than compensate for any trouble I may have taken in saving you from the hulks or treadmill. It is my intention that Marston Lynch, you, and myself shall all be gainers by this little opportunity—you being the only one of the three not deserving it. Pleasant dreams to you."

Mr. Brown was gone. He seemed to clear the staircase at a jump. The street door slammed, and a vehicle was heard dashing down the road at a break-neck rate. Mr. Brown's cab had evidently been waiting.

There were folding-doors in Mr. Lynch's dining-room, leading to a smaller apartment, with which there was no outer communication. Scarcely had Mr. Brown departed, when a gentle tap was heard against the folding doors.

Gregory Lynch started up as if he had been shot—with which, believing it, in my inexperience, to be a good tantalising melodramatic incident, I shall take the liberty of concluding the chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

WHICH IS SO SHORT THAT IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER
OR NOT THE PUBLISHER WILL PAY FOR IT.

"HOOHAY! Howker! here's a game," cried Marston Lynch, dancing round the easel on which stood the rapidly progressing portrait of Mrs. Murke, and waving an opened letter in his hand; "here's a lark!"

"Brayvo! our side," said Howker, from the neighbouring sofa, applauding with his, by no means, recently washed palms, "what's up?"

It was certainly well for Howker, that he possessed considerable moral and social excellencies, otherwise his toleration to a refined nature would have been difficult. All his personal friends were either "gents," "parties," or, in very familiar cases, "coves." He had faith in blue satin stocks and Literary and Scientific Institutions. An act of good breeding he was wont to define as "the genteel thing." He was a patron of cheap tailors and still cheaper tobacconists. The odour of his Cubas was unendurable. Of his baneful tendency to pumps and shirt frills, on full dress occasions, too much has already been said. His favourite poet was Doctor Mackay.

"What's up?" he repeated, breathing volcanic clouds

from his execrable Cuba, to the lasting detriment of the Merripebbles' curtains.

"What's up?" said Marston Lynch, fairly crowing with joy. "Why, I'm up—up in the stirrups. Here's a letter from that brick, Don Sancho de Saumarez, enclosing a twenty pound note."

"Hooroar! for him!" said Howker, with an enthusiastic leap.

"Listen to the letter:—'Dear Marston, my affairs are more flourishing than I expected to find them. I enclose you a twenty pound note, as a loan for which I shall exact exorbitant interest. So you'd better begin saving up at once.' Isn't that prime, Howker? 'Take care of it, and only make use of it to lighten the expenses to which your kind friend, Mrs. Merripebbles, is put on your account.' Of course she shall have it all. 'Stick to work at literature and the fine arts (don't believe anybody who tells you you can't succeed at both at once), and, remember, you have always a friend who hopes great things from you in—Yours affectionately, S. de Saumarez.'"

"P.S.—Kind regards to Mrs. M. and her charming daughter for whom I have just dispatched a packet of songs (newly published) of my own writing. Ask her to sing them. Rather cool, isn't it, for a "furriner" like me to presume to write songs in the English language, and get paid for them? However, don't be jealous."

"There, Howker, old boy, isn't he a brick?"

"I always said he was the most stunning party I ever met with," said Howker, rapturously.

"Yes, Howker, but you needn't call a gentleman a 'stunning party,' you know.

"Then what do you call the same gentleman a 'brick' for?" said Howker, rather warmly.

"That was in fun."

"And suppose I choose to call him a 'stunning party' in fun or in earnest, what then? I maintain he is one, such being my sentiments."

Howker was possibly not aware that there is an aristocracy in slang, as in all things else.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHICH, CONSCIENTIOUSLY SPEAKING, OUGHT TO HAVE
BEEN THE END OF CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

GREGORY LYNCH, having started up, as if he had been shot, as already stated, flew to the folding doors and opened them.

Poor little Lucy Wareing, his step-daughter, stood cowering before him, white with cold and apprehension.

"What the——were you doing then?" Gregory asked fiercely.

"Don't be angry, papa," said the girl, shrinking as if from a blow (let us do Gregory the justice to state that he had never given her one in his life.) "I'm very sorry; but there was a fire in that room before you came home—I was very tired—I've been sitting up a great deal since Franky has been ill—and—I didn't hear you come in—you only waked me with your talking—I am very sorry—I know I ought to have been up-stairs to give Frank his medicine—but—"

"But you preferred to stop there eavesdropping?"

"No, papa!" the girl answered with a slight flush, her indignation for a moment getting the better of her constitutional timidity. "I did not, indeed; but I did not like to disturb you till you were alone."

Was it possible that she had indeed slept over the critical moment and heard nothing of consequence? The idea of anybody being within hearing of a conversation to his disparagement, and not caring to listen to it from interested motives, never occurred to Mr. Lynch as a possibility.

"But you must have heard something of what passed between me and—the person who has just left?"

"No, indeed, papa; I would not have dared."

"You are not telling me a lie? You'll rue it if you are. Come, speak out."

"Indeed, papa, I am not; pray do not hold me so." Her step-father had clutched her roughly by the arm. "I did not hear a word, indeed, indeed."

Gregory was fain to release her arm. But he was far from satisfied.

"Of course you saw who it was?" he inquired, watching her narrowly, after a pause.

"No, papa, how could I? the doors were shut."

The keyhole had suggested itself to Gregory Lynch as the obvious and natural means of observation under the circumstances; but he did not think proper to mention it.

"At least, you recognised the voice?"

"No, papa—that is, I thought—though I must have been mistaken—I thought it was like—"

"Whose?"

"The—the foreign gentleman we met at Mrs. Merripables'."

"You were wrong; it was not he."

One of the few scriptural precepts, or examples, Mr. Lynch had ever cared to lay much to heart was one which he had adapted and amplified after his own particular manner. He was accustomed to say, not in his haste, but at his most deliberate leisure, that all men, including women and children, were liars. People of this way of thinking are usually baffled when you tell them, unexpectedly, what they know to be the truth. Gregory Lynch was baffled by the ingenuousness of his step-daughter; and felt highly incensed at her for taking so great a liberty with him.

He continued his cross-examination:—

"Do you mean to tell me you did not hear any single sentence or word of importance—the name, for instance, of any particular person?"

"Yes, papa, I thought I heard Marston's name, and no doubt it was that made me think of the Mexican gentleman——"

"What about Marston?"

"Not a word, papa, that I could understand." The girl's face, though still pale and fearful, was perfectly open and candid.

"If she is deceiving me," thought Gregory, "she is more artful than I gave her credit for, and will require some management."

The appearance of innocence itself was always a very suspicious circumstance to Mr. Gregory Lynch. He looked upon it as a sign of good acting. However, he had no alternative for the present, but to assume and believe in the truth of the girl's story—supposing only that she had been asleep.

"I see you are mistaken altogether. The person is a man who has given me some annoyance lately, and I wished to know if you had ever seen him hanging about the place before. I should have been glad if you had listened—accidentally overheard, I mean, what passed between us."

"I am sorry I did not, papa. May I go now?"

"Yes."

"Good night, papa."

The girl was tripping out of the room like a happy fawn, with a marvellously brightened countenance. The one great aim of this poor child's life was, to avoid, or, once in it, to escape from, the presence of her step-father. And hers was one of those unfortunate faces that can dissemble no emotions. Finding herself free to go, after this terrible encounter, her delight was boundless. And she showed it.

But Gregory could only read in her expression signs of

exultation at having successfully duped him, an achievement, as he considered it, of such difficulty and magnitude that the feelings of anybody having accomplished it would be naturally uncontrollable. He started up from the chair into which he had fallen, and seized the girl by the arm more rudely than before.

She uttered a suppressed scream, and turned deadly pale. "The very picture of detected guilt," thought the virtuous Gregory.

Much nonsense has been written about the boldness of innocence. Unless gifted with excellent nerves and muscles, favourable opportunity, and at all events an equal adversary, Innocence is possibly the greatest coward living. At any rate it is certain that Miss Wareing both looked and felt guilty. It is equally so that her confusion was heightened by her utter ignorance of the crime which she supposed she must have committed.

"You have been telling me lies, Miss," said Gregory Lynch.

"Indeed, papa, I have not," the child persisted, but almost inaudibly.

Mr. Lynch was not free from a certain abstract respect for the liar who sticks to it, regarding that character as a worthy adversary to cope with. Still he was fond of rapid and decisive victories. A prolonged siege exasperated him beyond all hope of mercy for the garrison.

"Come, come, young madam," he said, his grasp tightening on the slight arm, till the frail figure of the girl shook to and fro like a leaf in the wind, with the quiverings of his uncontrollable excitement; "no tricks with me. We'll see which is the strongest. Out with the whole story. No getting hold of my secrets for other people's ears. No fine stories against me, to back up lies about your ill-treatment here. Out with it all—every word; and if you conceal or prevaricate a syllable, you will wish you had been dead rather——"

He stopped suddenly; for the light weight had increased in his grasp. The girl was fainting with terror.

She was a very obstinate girl, certainly.

He threw rather than placed her on a convenient sofa. He was rather glad she had stopped him. He had been on the eve of committing himself.

He attempted some not very gentle means at restoration. The girl rallied a little. He must alter his tactics.

"There, Lucy, I didn't mean to frighten you; but I have had my temper tried to-night. You know I detest falsehood. I wished particularly, as I have told you, that you should have overheard what occurred between me and ———, the man who has just left. I thought you had done so and was annoyed at what seemed a sort of—in short, want of candour—and so forth. But you heard nothing?"

"Nothing," the girl protested; but in the clumsiest and most faltering manner.

"I am sorry for it. Go up-stairs."

The little nervous face was bright again, and the little feet tripped briskly, a second time, to the door.

"Stay!"

She stopped on the threshold, pale and more guilty-looking than ever.

"While Frank is ill, said Gregory, with a sorry simulation of paternal tenderness for his measles-struck offspring, "I don't wish you to leave the house, nor yet to receive any visitors,—the people of Ashgrove especially."

"Very well, papa."

Lucy's countenance fell visibly.

"She is disappointed," said Gregory to himself. "The minx has heard everything, and counted on that quarter for making it useful. Lock and key must be put in force. And hark ye," he added aloud, with a cowering look; "not a word of what you have heard to-night, or what you have not heard to living soul."

"Good night, papa,"

Lucy's feet were heard pattering up-stairs in the distance. She had escaped the dreaded Presence alive, which

was all she cared about. At the second story, she was heard singing like an uncaged bird.

Gregory Lynch holding the handle of the parlour-door in his hand, followed her with eyes and ears in the upper darkness. He was probably ignorant of the dramatic story of Cromwell and the page, and a regret that he had omitted to poniard Lucy in her sleep may never have occurred to him. But, if he had possessed a little more imagination than he did, his feelings at the moment might have shaped themselves into a wish that the bannisters would give way at the fourth landing, and the eldest born of his late wife be dashed to atoms on the marble pavement at the entrance hall to Huskisson Lodge.

You see what sins the dangerous faculty of imagination will lead us to! Gregory Lynch was spared so unholy a wish; still he felt somewhat annoyed at the idea of his step-daughter going to sleep comfortably in a small room at the top of his own house, and waking in the morning alive, and in the fullest possession of her faculties.

Unless we act upon the cruel belief that people deserve to be punished for their misdeeds, Gregory Lynch was an object of pity. As I wish the interest of this story rather to depend on the development of character than on dramatic surprises (I may be allowed to speak of the attempt, ere the failure of the deed shall have utterly confounded me), I may as well state in the coldest matter-of-fact manner, that Gregory *had* committed the offence, the mere accusation of which we have already seen cost him two hundred and fifty pounds. Quarrelling with a vicious old father, who had threatened to deprive him of what he had been taught to believe his just inheritance—as much as though slave-ships had been feudal castles, and hosiery contracts, lands allotted by William the Conqueror—he had taken precautions to secure his birthright—that was all. True, those precautions had been exceptional, and even illegal. But he had taken them as a stern duty, much as he would have provided a feather-bed with which

to smother his lamented parent, had that patriarch been attacked with hydrophobia.

He had succeeded, and, as it were, earned his victory solely by the exercise of his own courage and ingenuity. He had prevented a despised and outcast branch of his family from usurping his own possessions. These possessions had consequently seemed more than ever his, as by right of conquest.

And now, after years of impunity, as he was just reaching the height of his ambition (such ambition as he was capable of entertaining), he was upset and degraded by a concatenation of accidents. A man who might be an Irish rope-dancer for anything he knew had been to Mexico, and met with another man who had physically promised to die of consumption a dozen years ago. A boy, who also had no right to be alive, had suddenly appeared as a resident in the same town, burning with vicious animosity towards him. A prying eavesdropping child had most probably overheard a conversation that might damn him.

It is no proof of any monstrosity of character in Gregory Lynch that remorse had little to do with the agony by which he was rent, as he sat alone in his wretched splendid apartment biting his nails and groaning. He had committed, it is true, a legal felony; but the moral enormity of the act, according to the code of his education, was, as we have seen, trivial. Moreover, it was long ago; and I think we may come to the conclusion, reader, that of all earthly creditors, Conscience is the one whose little account it is the easiest to "square," with a little time to do it in. In the fortunately improbable event of either of us murdering our mutual friend Jones from motives of personal antipathy, or an eye to the reversion of his little property, there is no doubt that the remainder of our respective lives would be particularly uncomfortable. But the name of the spectre haunting us would not be Jones—it would go by the appellation of Calcraft.

Fear of indefinable consequences, then, was the para-

mount feeling that agitated Mr. Gregory Lynch. Next to that, resentment at the idea of his having been possibly duped, with the certainty that he had been insulted and humiliated. This Irish-Mexican adventurer, as he loved to consider his late tormentor, had taken him by storm—had made him commit himself—worse than all, had got money out of him, a calamity which, had he been more his own master at the moment, might have been prevented.

But, bitter as was the present, there was the vague future. These three—man, boy, and girl—what was the extent of their power over him?

Hating them all three most cordially, Mr. Gregory Lynch, in his perplexity, drank another bottle of old port, and went to bed.

CHAPTER IX.

PROGRESS.

MRS. MURKE's portrait was a triumphant success. Not only was the likeness pronounced striking by the entire Row; but, further, the picture found favour in the eyes of the fair original, on two distinct grounds. First, the hue and texture of the red velvet she loved had been depicted with rare fidelity. Secondly, a tinge of gentle melancholy the artist had thrown into the expression, reminded her forcibly of how she had looked after her last memorable attack of neuralgia. Mrs. Murke regarded her illnesses as great events to be recorded in history, like battles; and was fond of possessing tangible trophies or memorials of their occurrence. Looking on the famous attack of neuralgia as the Great Fire of London of her existence (she was wont to say there was very little left of her after it)—Marston Lynch's portrait may be considered as its appropriate Monument.

A portrait mania immediately set in in Ash Grove, the inhabitants of which were organised much on the principle of Panurge's sheep. Where any one led, the rest followed. A novelty of any kind generally went through the Row, like measles or influenza. The fortunate Marston found himself inundated with commissions, and prospects of

what to him seemed boundless wealth were opened to him. First, the grateful Rufflestons, anxious to make some return for the priceless little treasure with which our hero had solaced them in their troubles, set him to work on a family group of great magnitude (the turban of Mrs. Rufflestone's mamma towering over all in the middle distance), at a good remunerative price. The progress of this was so satisfactory as to induce young Mr. Tofts, who was a keen man of business, and knew all about the fluctuations of markets, to command a life-size portrait of his sister, ere the rising artist's price should be augmented. The young lady having cost her brother a good deal lately in satins and jewellery, for the proper maintenance of his state, that gentleman thought it no bad economy to make use of those splendours for the embellishment, by their pictorial representation, of his newly-furnished dining-room. During the sittings for the last-named subject, Miss Tofts made hot love to our hero, and talked to him about Tennyson. But not only was the painter's heart elsewhere—the young lady's H's were defective. So Marston passed safely through the perilous ordeal.

Mrs. Merripebbles herself—honestly proud of the success of her *protégé*—repeatedly commissioned him to make stupendous groups, at exorbitant prices, of herself and family; but, usually, on a rise in the price of potatoes, or the advent of a school-bill, countermanded them on the following day, with much groaning on the subject of earthly vanities, and the duty of retrenchment generally.

Rumours of our hero's attachment to Miss Crooze, the handsome, though no longer girlish, schoolmistress of Number One, have already reached the reader. A brief scene will give an insight into that matter.

Marston was at work on a picture in the Merripebbles' breakfast parlour. (He had coolly appropriated that apartment as his *atelier*, and was impervious to hints as to the smell of oils and the injurious effects of trampled pigments on carpets of Brussels manufacture.) Miss Crooze looked in, just to see how he was getting on. Somehow, Miss

Crooze had been very fond of looking in—to see how he was getting on—of late, between school hours.

Having criticised the work in hand rather severely—(it must be remembered that Miss Crooze was a “fine woman,” and bound to be severe in virtue thereof)—she inquired casually of our hero what he would charge for painting a portrait of herself.

“Of you!” cried Marston, rapturously, starting from his seat and throwing his palette with the paint downwards on a damask covered chair. “Of you! Oh! if I could have dared to ask—”

“Dared! what nonsense!” said Miss Crooze, reddening visibly, but trying to be cool and “superior.” “Ask what you like—I only want to see if I can afford it.”

“You misunderstand me,” said Marston, “wilfully (which was the case). If you would let me attempt those features—do you suppose I would accept payment?”

Miss Crooze thought he would be very foolish indeed if he did not. And, endeavouring to restore the conversation to its original business footing, resumed—

“Come, tell me your lowest price; I can’t afford much, you know; but I should like to send a copy of my face, before it gets quite unlike what it used to be, to—”

“To whom?” Marston asked fiercely, grasping his maulstick.

“To one who loves me very much,” answered Marian, coquettishly. She couldn’t resist it, though she felt she was doing wrong.

Marston Lynch threw away his maulstick, and sank heavily in his chair.

“Never!” he cried theatrically; “I would rather cut my right hand off.”

He clutched his palette and brushes again, and proceeded to make such a mess of Miss Tofts’ countenance as cost him days to rectify.

Marian approached him gently and laid her beautiful white, but alas! perceptibly wrinkled hand on his shoulder. Marston quivered beneath the touch, and, unable to con-

troul himself, seized the hand in his own and covered it with kisses—sobbing convulsively.

"You foolish boy," said Marian, looking at him sadly, but compassionately—(was the compassion all for him?)—"Do you know how old I am?"

"No!" exclaimed Marston, with energy; "and I don't want to. Love is of no age; and I love you. You know it, and have known it for weeks and weeks."

"For weeks and weeks," said the sad sweet voice. "And do you not know that in weeks and weeks, very few of them too, I shall be—"

She bit her lip savagely to arrest the self-condemning word. Why, after all, should it be uttered? and yet she felt ashamed of the reticence.

But what did Marston care for the flight of time? Remember he was barely eighteen! His thoughts were far otherwise engaged.

"Let me know the worst," he implored with tears in his eyes. "If there is no hope, tell me. For whom did you want the portrait?"

What woman, with an honest love offered to her—however impossible its acceptance—can reject the flower without indulging in a whiff of its perfume? What woman, though she might not afford to buy diamonds, can pass a jeweller's shop window?

"Not for a lover," she answered, with a re-assuring smile; "do not be afraid of that. Only for my poor old father."

And in truth it was the thought of the honest old tailor in Monmouthshire had suggested the proposition, coupled perhaps with an unconfessed inclination for sitting occasionally alone in the society of that ridiculous, romantic, amusing, warm-hearted boy-painter.

"Your father," cried our hero, brightening up, and seizing the lady's hand once more. "Oh, let me do it! Let me, as a gift not to you, but to him; let me, by sending him a poor reminder of that face that he must love

so, earn some claim to his regard, that I may at least have an advocate in him who ——”

“Tut! let go my hand. Here’s Mrs. Merripebbles.”

Marston attacked the portrait again with ruinous effect as that lady entered the room.

“I’ve been asking Mr. Marston what he will paint my portrait for,” said Marian, perfectly self-possessed, and in her coldest manner, “to send to my father; but I cannot get him to name the price.”

“Price!” cried Mrs. Merripebbles, who was generous by fits and starts with the services of other people as with her own. “Why nothing to be sure. Eh, dear! Painting such a handsome face as yours will bring him troops of customers; and who knows but a handsome portrait, painted in his best manner, will bring you a husband?”

Mrs. Merripebbles laughed heartily for several minutes. She was in excellent spirits that day, having just received her dividends.

Finally, it was agreed that Marston should paint Miss Crooze’s portrait for a nominal price, the lady steadily refusing his gratuitous services.

Marian withdrew; the coolness of the “fine woman” being sorely tried by the burning glances of her boy-lover.

Who shall say but that poor schoolmistress, with her thirty years just knelling, with her splendid form withering, and her warm heart wasting, as she stood in her lonely room, counting the silver streaks in her raven hair, dwelling with exaggeration upon each poor charm that remained to her, striving against hope to strike a balance in favour of love against time; recalling all the old tales she had read of perennial beauties preserving their loveliness through generations of suitors, and reconciling these to other tales of poets and men of genius becoming prematurely old, and clinging for support but to tenderness and devotion; bitterly wondering that half a dozen paltry years either way should be a barrier between her and a happiness she would have deserved; but feeling in her sad, worldly, thirty years’ knowledge, that the barrier

was there—impassable as Charon's ferry—who shall say but that she was as legitimate an object of the holiest compassion as the heroine of any soul's tragedy that ever was written? Who shall say that her petulant snappings and bickerings when she returned to her dreary day work, after that one brief glimpse of a Paradise unattainable, were more contemptible than the ravings of the tragedy queen in her dungeon?

Marston Lynch's connexion increased rapidly—and the breakfast-parlour was getting into such a mess that it became absolutely necessary to give him notice to quit.

And here a little digressive explanation of our hero's character and antecedents becomes necessary. He was a plant of the tendril species. Though he had not known a settled home since his infancy, the most precious elements of domesticity had been furnished him in the care and friendship of his father from whom he had never been separated except by death. He was not at all self-reliant. The very talents his parent had so sedulously cultivated in him he had never known the value of. At the time we are treating of, he had not yet got over his astonishment at finding he could turn one of his accomplishments to profitable account. Everything he had previously attempted had been under the guidance and correction of his father, and had appeared to him more that father's work than his own. This was the astonishment of the child first walking alone.

After the sad blow that had deprived him of his dearly-loved guide and companion, he had gratefully accepted the friends into whose hands fate had thrown him, as the legitimate successors to his father's care of him.

He had become deeply attached to them, and with good reason. The new home, with its unforeseen affections and pleasant associations, had done much to throw his great sorrow into the background. He could no more bear to contemplate the leaving that home than he could have borne, three months ago, to look forward to the death of his father.

Though careless and unexperienced in the minor matters that make up life, it must not be supposed that Marston Lynch underrated the real substantial kindness of his hosts towards him. On the contrary, he exaggerated it immensely; and, in the riches of his imagination, planned tremendous schemes for their fortune and happiness. Nor was he behind-hand in the practical gratitude of the present. Every farthing he had received, from any source, he would have poured into the lap of his benefactress, whose persistent refusal of any recompense whatever only served to heap up a compound interest of affection and reverence on the original debt of obligation.

Accordingly, it will be understood, that when Mrs. Merripebbles, one morning, in her kindest manner, suggested to Marston that now he was making such progress in his profession, it would be advisable for him to remove to more commodious quarters, where he might pursue his studies with less restraint, his countenance fell visibly, and tears stood in his eyes (tears, by the way, on the shortest provocation formed one of Marston's besetting failings through life).

His hostess saw his distress, and understood it. She took him kindly by the hand and did what she had never done before—kissed him.

"My poor boy," she said, smoothing his hair like a child's, "don't think we wish to get rid of you. God help me! it would be like losing one of my own. But, you must remember, you are quite a man now, and will soon be a famous one, I hope. You will be better thrown a little on your own resources, than getting stupid among a lot of girls and old women. You needn't leave the neighbourhood! The Miss Crayners have two beautiful rooms to let, that will just suit you, for a very small rent. You will be with your friend, Mr. Howker, and can see us whenever you please, with the knowledge that you are your own master."

Marston brightened up immediately. This compromise gave things an unexpected turn. There was something

glorious in the prospect of living in his own establishment—being free to come and go whenever he pleased—and yet not absolutely driven to rely upon those habits of self-dependence which——well, which he never managed to acquire in the whole course of his life !

That evening Marston Lynch was Howker's fellow-lodger, on which occasion, as in assertion of his newly-attained independence, he ignited his first pipe, under the tuition and guidance of his more experienced friend. He has never been wholly free from the smell of tobacco since.

Miss Crooze's portrait, viewed as a likeness, was a failure ; but as a dazzling representation of the most angelic beauty in the first flush of youth, a marvellous triumph. It must be recorded here that Marston Lynch remained madly in love with the mature original for the space of nearly five calendar months.

CHAPTER X.

A WATER PARTY ON THE WYNDE.

SUMMER came. And though Longport is the second, or third, or fourth, or fifth, I don't know which, town in the kingdom, containing the census knows how many thousand inhabitants, and with a yearly tonnage of shipping that the Messrs. Chambers of Edinburgh only can calculate, nevertheless, summer in Longport is a very different sort of thing to what Londoners may imagine it. True, there are reeking courts and foul alleys in Longport, where the sun never penetrates, on an almost metropolitan scale—a fact that would seem to entitle the town to the high rank of civilisation it claims for itself. But the sunshine and the meadows are not so many dreary miles away: and there is the glorious river Wynde, washing the quays of the town, not with the refuse of some dozen miles of sewerage, but bringing bright green salt water from the neighbouring ocean and fresh invigorating sea breezes.

It is a fine thing for Longport, that proximity to the ocean. I don't mean from the Chambers' point of view, as a mere convenience for commerce—whose steamer funnels somewhat interfere with *my* view of the case. (I am not of that school of philosophy that believes rivers to have been created for the purpose of feeding navigable

canals.) I mean it is a fine thing in the opportunities it affords the pent-up townsman for an occasional, even if unconscious, communion with nature. Howker could sniff the sea breeze through the counting-house window behind which he was imprisoned daily from nine to six. I have seen a sea-gull fly right over the top of High-street, and all but perch on the roof of what had been Mr. Lynch's outfitting establishment.

There is no such stream for water parties as the Wynde. The bounteous river accommodates all tastes. If you are a yachting man, and feel inclined to rough it a little, half an hour's sail with a light breeze down the river brings you fairly into the ocean. If you wish for a romantic dreamy excursion in still water between wooded shores that cast deep reflections, you have scarcely passed the immense line of docks and warehouses, up the river, when a bend in the stream brings you among snug country seats, rich farm lands, and white cottages, with undulating backgrounds, and more than one ivied church and ruined abbey peeping from among the foliage.

Then, down the river, on either side towards the sea are scattered miniature Margates and Ramsgates, with their bright spruce hotels, neat rows of houses, and trim bathing-machines. And up the river towards the country, you find old village inns in shady nooks, with their marvellous larders, and their wainscoted dining-rooms overlooking the quiet river, and their thickly-wooded shrubberies and pleasure gardens. It was no bad idea, that of building a town on the Wynde.

One dazzling morning in June, the Wynde looked at its very best. A thousand noble ships leaving the port with a favourable breeze almost brought you round to the Chambers' way of thinking, and made you believe that commerce was something more than a necessary evil, a means for administering to our wants; and was really and truly a positive good in itself. The little fierce busy steamers were darting to and from the various river suburbs like water-insects. Parties of pleasure were

getting under weigh in crafts of every build, mocking the toilers on the quays with merry notes of music. A light river mist silvered over, without concealing, the distant landscape, while it softened down the more ignoble details of the town. The gulls appeared to think the entire scene got up expressly for their amusement—and were in a frantic state of exuberance.

A merry party of holiday makers were just embarking in a kind of sailing boat, laden with mighty preparations for a picnic. They were all, the master of the boat excepted, old friends. First, Mr. and Mrs. Merripebbles, the latter radiant and boisterous, the former smiling but apprehensive, and with a general tendency to get in the way. Secondly, Miss Crooze, with her pet spaniel, Charley, object of undying hatred and jealousy to Marston Lynch. Thirdly, Marston himself, having doffed his mourning for the nonce, and attired in a nautical suit of ineffable coxcombry. Fourthly, Howker (favoured with a holiday), in a hideous parody of the same. Fifthly, Miss Tofts. Sixthly, Miss Maud Carlton, and ——

Lucy Wareing.

Had Gregory Lynch, then, relaxed in his suspicious severity? He had been compelled to. Mrs. Merripebbles, detecting a tendency on his part to coerce and confine the girl, had besieged him hotly—charging him with divers impossible enormities—and representing his character generally in the most monstrous lights. Gregory, feeling his position rather weak at present, was not inclined to challenge battle on any score with so redoubtable an adversary. And as he had no absolute proof that the girl was dangerous to him—and even if he had, was without means of preventing her from some day divulging all she knew, dungeons and fetters not forming part of the economy of Huskisson Lodge, he was fain to assign her to her old associates, trusting to her general dread of his anger to keep silence, supposing she had anything to conceal. He meditated getting rid of her to a distance at an early period, as soon as he could fix upon an appropriate desti-

nation. In the meantime, she led much her old life—coldness and drudgery at home, unmingled happiness when her only friends fetched her out into the world's sunshine. It is needless to say that, being the unwitting means of adding to her step-father's perplexities, she was hated by that gentleman more than ever.

As the two young ladies we have just mentioned together will each exercise a material influence over the future life of Marston Lynch, let us give a glance at their relations towards him at the present juncture.

He liked them both very well—as he liked most people when he knew them. He hated Gregory Lynch only in the abstract—much as he hated the villains in romances. And let us remark, by the way, that for all he knew of his relation's conduct, his hatred would have been most unjust if it had been altogether real; but there was a good deal of youthful affection in it—a good deal of the desire to oppose a 'big wig.' Had Gregory had time to prepare his plans; had he chosen the proper moment to conciliate his nephew he might easily have converted him into a partisan, whose faith not all the schemes, assertions, or proofs of Don Sancho de Saumarez could have shaken.

To return to the two girls—Marston himself always spoke of them as the "two girls." He considered them mere children, as indeed so they were, but he forgot that he was a child also. He patronised them immensely, as was becoming in the desponding lover of Marian Crooze. In Lucy he took an especial interest; instituting himself, as it were, her champion by verbal protest against the oppression, real and imagined, of her detested step-father. And as Lucy was timid and loving and clinging by nature, she felt grateful for this doughty championship of rights she was at a loss to comprehend, and only wished he would not threaten such terrible visitations on the head of the individual whom she never remembered having done her any particular harm. And Marston Lynch thought her a very nice little girl indeed for liking him.

Miss Carlton's nature was not at all timid or clinging.

With regard to the loving—we will see about that by-and-by. She was a very cool young lady, accustomed to do exactly as she pleased. It pleased her to like Marston Lynch very well indeed. It was not of the least consequence to her that he treated her as a child, patronised her insultingly, ordered her out of the room when he wished to be alone, and fell in love with grown up women before her eyes. She allowed him to take all those liberties, as she would have allowed a pet lap-dog to tear her best dress in pieces. She thought him very good, very clever, and very handsome. And she had been early taught that whatever she saw that was rare and precious might be hers for the asking.

Those who remember what they were at eighteen, need scarcely be told that Marston Lynch never connected a thought of love with either of those girls. Once when that worldly scoundrel Howker had hinted that it would be no bad plan for his friend to secure the affections ("stick up to" was his phrase) of so wealthy a heiress as Miss Carlton, Marston threatened to quarrel with him outright and for ever, charging him with a base design of weaning his, Marston's, affections from Miss Crooze, from interested motives.

(It was perfectly true that Howker *was* in love with Miss Crooze. But he had no need of such scheming. He was verging on thirty himself, and knew that the passion of his young friend would not last him long. So he waited, like a coffee-room philosopher who knows that the evening paper must be disengaged in ten minutes.)

Both the girls were in their sixteenth year. Lucy, frail and delicate, had already formed into something like a little fairy woman. Maud, on the contrary, was long, strong, and bony—with nothing attractive about her but a splendid head of dark hair and eyes to match. *They* were certainly beautiful. But for the rest she was a problem.

And now the pleasure boat has tacked twice across the river and is making, with a side wind, for Milwood Abbey where the picnic is to be held.

The festivities, it should be stated, are at the expense of Marston Lynch, who has just received the money for his original picture—sold from the Longport Exhibition.

Now, why has Marian Crooze decked herself out in this manner? Why is her appearance so youthful, and her dress so becoming? Why is it that the silver streaks in her black hair have disappeared and in their place the sunlight, as it plays on the glossy bands, is obstructed by coarse blotches of some rough greasy material? She knows it is of no use. She knows that if her boy-lover were to make that proposal she has had so much trouble in staving off for weeks, she would not accept him. She would die rather than bring misery on his head, to purchase a few brief months of delusive happiness that she herself would give up all for—let the waking from the dream be what it might. And yet there she is, dressed like a girl—much more attractive than any girl present—and driving Marston Lynch to despair by her disdainful coquetry.

All I can say is, if any one of my readers grudges her so trifling a consolation I have no wish to cultivate that reader's acquaintance.

They have reached Milwood Abbey. The boat is moored to a tree, and they disembark there. Friends are there to meet them: Mr. Tofts, prominent among the number, with a surprise prepared, in the shape of cases of champagne and a band of music. (Tofts has an eye upon Miss Carlton, who sees through him with the keenness of five-and-forty, and despises him accordingly.)

Dinner is served in the ruins. Tofts has brought some friends of his—landed proprietors—with whom to overawe the assembly. The landed proprietor's family have brought a friend with them—a captain of cavalry—with whom to overawe Tofts. The cavalry captain, in order to show the extreme goodness of his breeding, cuts his friends, the landed proprietors (whose proprietaryship is on a very limited scale, or it would, doubtless, have been otherwise); and attaches himself for the rest of the day to Miss Crooze

whom he considers the only handsome woman present, albeit somewhat *passée*, and whose acquirements enable him to display his knowledge of the French language, which it may be parenthetically added, is limited. Marian flirts designedly with the cavalry captain, with whom she is secretly disgusted. She is also secretly disgusted with herself, but she can't help it. It is so much pleasanter to see Marston pacing up and down the thicket—glaring like a tiger, ready to spring out on the cavalry officer—than to point him to her grey hairs, show him her wrinkles, awaken him from his dream, and never know what it is to be loved again!

The day passed as all days will do. There had been much mirth, but Marston had not tasted it. He had deeply meditated on the question of duelling, and came to the conclusion that under some circumstances it was justifiable.

They were to return as they came, in the boat. Tofts remained where he was, being on a visit to his friends, the landed proprietors. The cavalry officer had particular business in Longport, and would feel grateful for a lift in the boat. Miss Crooze made room for him at her side.

Oh, how Marston longed for a storm and a shipwreck, in which all the rest of the company might be providentially saved, with the exception of his heart's idol, whose salvation was to rest between him and the cavalry officer! Which would come off best?

No such calamity occurred, however, though our hero's desperation managed to bring about something nearly as disastrous.

The evening was beautiful, and there were yet two clear hours of daylight. It was agreed that they should drift down past the city, with the ebbing tide, and leave the boat at one of the suburban watering-places alluded to (where the cavalry officer had proposed supper), returning home by one of the steamers.

They had already passed the city, and were in the broad

mouth of the river. The tide was ebbing rapidly, and Marian was flirting with the cavalry officer horribly.

A fresh breeze sprang up, necessitating some adjustment of the sail, when the agreeable discovery was made that the boatman was drunk. The cavalry officer looked alarmed. He was no coward; but neither was he a sailor, and he doubted whether he was in the hands of any one who might be worthy of the name.

"I say, by Jove," he said, "do you think we're all right here? Hadn't we better go back?"

Marston laughed sardonically.

"Don't be afraid, sir," he said. "There are people here who can take care of you."

"I am obliged to you for the assurance, young gentleman," said the officer, with more dignity and propriety of expression than he had yet shown; "but I was thinking of lives more precious than my own, that have no right to be trusted in inexperienced hands."

"All lives here, sir, are precious," said Marston, bombastically; "but the most precious is fortunately in safer hands than yours. Fear nothing, madam," he added grandly to Miss Crooze, who immediately burst out laughing, as did also the cavalry officer.

"Upon my soul," said the latter, "you are a most amusing young fellow. Only don't put our respective courage to the test by upsetting the boat with your movements."

Marston was in an agony of jealousy and—fear, that he was going to cry!

"Sit down, Marston; there's a good boy," said Marian maliciously; "and if you want to sit by me, here, nurse Charley."

And she flopped her spaniel down in Marston's lap.

"Yes, nurse Charley," said the cavalry officer, laughing immensely. "You'll find it capital amusement, by Jove! soothing to the feelings. Eh, halloa!"

Marston Lynch, purple with rage, had started up and hurled the spaniel overboard.

"Prove your courage," said he fiercely to the soldier, "and rescue the other pet puppy."

The dog was endeavouring to paddle against the tide, which was too strong for him. Marian screamed and wrung her hands; she had lost one whose love, at all events, would have lasted with his life. The captain looked exceedingly blank.

Marston's heart smote him. He had sacrificed a poor, affectionate dog, for a paltry point—for an epigram in a passion. He was an excellent swimmer. He threw off his jacket and hat, and leapt into the water.

I will do Marston Lynch the justice to say that he did this, not with any view to effect an after credit, but solely from a remorseful sense of justice to the dog.

The spaniel, after having been whirled round and round in several ineffectual attempts to battle with the tide, had given himself up to the stream, to which his light, buoyant form scarcely offered the slightest resistance, and was already far in the distance. Marston Lynch, though, as I have said, a good swimmer, and with the tide in his favour, was of a bony frame, and moreover encumbered by his clothes. It was an exertion to him to keep afloat, as he was not physically strong. The dog receded from him rapidly; but he swam on unconscious of the swiftness with which he was being borne from the boat, and not noticing that the shores were widening on each side of him.

The excitement in the boat was intense. If ever the whole embarkation had been in danger, it was now. In vain Howker and the soldier implored them not to lean so much on one side. They could think of nothing but Marston and his safety. Poor Marian Crooze, with her elbows resting on the gunwale, and clutching her white cheeks with her finger-nails till the blood came, looked fifty years old, as she glared despairingly at the receding speck which just indicated that the head of Marston Lynch was above water. Such wind as there was, was against

them, and the boat by no means kept pace with the current. The cavalry officer, prompt, like all his class, in real danger, seized a long disused oar, and applied himself to rowing with all his might. Howker, with a blank face, promptly imitated his example. They worked stoutly, but they were clumsy oarsmen. They could not gain on the swimmer, who, however, in his turn, had gained on the dog. Finding himself in a side current, where the waters ran less violently, the latter had instinctively turned again, struggling once more with the tide. Marston Lynch swam rapidly towards him, and, to the delight of the passengers in the boat, was seen to clutch the animal, and turn to swim back.

The fact is, a swimmer with the tide is like a man in a balloon, whose ignorance of the space he traverses, or the rate he flies at, is so strikingly described by my friend, Henry Mayhew, in the second chapter of the "Great World of London." Marston, who scarcely thought he had swam more than a score yards or so from his friends, was scarcely perceptible to them. The fact of his having recovered the dog they ascertained more from his action than by anything that was visible of the latter.

To return was no such easy task. The wind had freshened dead against the tide, and the hull of the sailing boat being of ancient build, offered a great body of resistance. The swimmer, evidently attempting to gain the boat, was as obviously receding from it. The suspense was agonising. The women crowded over the larboard side nearly upsetting the boat. Lucy Wareing, her sensitive nerves strung to their utmost pitch of intensity, had leapt with one foot on to the gunwale, supporting herself with one hand by a stay, where the wind swayed her light form to and fro like a pennon.

Suddenly they were startled even from their absorbing contemplations by a voice that none recognised, proceeding from the centre of the boat above all their heads, exclaiming with intense distinctness—

"I will make the fortune of any who will save him. I

will give any of you hundreds—thousands—if you will save him. Save him, you cowards!”

The last sentence was uttered in a perfect shriek. All looked up. Maud Carlton had mounted on a bulkhead leading to the closet that served as a cabin, and was standing upright clutching the mast feverishly, her bonnet blown back, her long black hair streaming behind her, and her splendid black eyes looking twice their size. She had grown suddenly noble and beautiful, and stood there facing the wind like a young Pythoness.

“Save him,” she screamed, “there’s not a hair on his head that isn’t worth all your lives, and twenty thousand of mine. Pull your oars—row away—row away, men, like devils! Ho! Marston, keep up, boy; swim quietly—not too fast; keep up, and we’ll catch you.”

She roared the latter words through her hands with the lungs of a stentor, and catching the wind with the judgment of an old sailor. She then leapt down, and in less time than a sentence can be written had seized every available floating thing on deck—kegs, planks, and what not, and thrown them overboard with what seemed supernatural strength—always throwing them to the spot whence it seemed most likely they would float in the swimmer’s direction.

This done, she clutched Marian Crooze by the wrist with a jerk, looked fiercely in the blank despairing face of the governess, and said, between her teeth, in a voice that was almost fiendish, “If he is lost through you, your lapdog, and your nonsense, I’ll be hanged for your murder. Mind!”

She then strode to the helm, and thrusting the muddled and scared boatman away, seized the tiller and held it firmly to keep the boat in its present course.

Miss Carlton had never been on the water before in her life, except on a river steamboat, and you could not have taught her the simplest rule in navigation in twenty years of schooling.

All I have described occurred in a very few seconds.

Howker and the soldier rowed manfully. Maud Carlton held the tiller, with both hands, rigid to its place. The breeze lulled a little. Marston Lynch, apparently stout of heart as ever, was rapidly nearing the boat, when a dozen screams announced a fresh calamity.

CHAPTER XI.

IN WHICH THE AUTHOR, AFTER CONSIDERABLE LABOUR,
SUCCEEDS IN FISHING HIS HERO OUT OF THE WATER.

MARSTON LYNCH having been left in the water for the space of thirty-one days, common humanity would suggest an immediate attention to his case. Nevertheless, as he jumped overboard of his own free will—and certainly wanted cooling at the time—I think the hydropathic course of treatment to which he so voluntarily submitted his case should have the amplest opportunities for testing its advantages. In my opinion, Marston Lynch thoroughly deserved a ducking. I intend keeping him in the water as long as is consistent with his personal safety, as a warning to him for the future.

Besides, the reader must be burning to know whence proceeded the screams that so abruptly broke the concluding stillness of my last chapter. As I detest keeping people in suspense, it behoves me to neglect everything in order to satisfy the reader's laudable curiosity on that head. If, therefore, he will accompany me (with his proverbial gentleness, of course) about two miles further down the river, and allow me to introduce him to some new acquaintances—to half-an-hour of whose conversation it will be necessary for him to listen, patiently—he will receive the information he requires, almost immediately,

Just when Charley, in houndish unconsciousness of the

perils of the deep awaiting him, was enjoying the last few moments of comfort on his mistress's lap, a small pleasure yacht, of elegant modern build, and fitted up in the most luxurious manner, entered the mouth of the Wynde, sailing beautifully before the breeze, with her head due for Longport.

There were five people on board. Two of these were the boat's crew, a man and a boy, of whom no description is necessary. The remaining three were the owner of the vessel and two gentlemen, his guests, who were lounging on deck in the lazy enjoyment of exquisite champagne and faultless Havannahs; at the same time, drinking and inhaling the yet more exhilarating and soothing influences of the sea breeze and summer evening.

The yacht was named the "Fayaway," and its owner was named Biglow T. Miles, Esq. Is it necessary to add that he was an American gentleman? Why is it that all American gentlemen have full grown Christian and surnames, with one or more budding sprouts, as it were, of nomenclature, in the shape of initials between them? I cannot tell; but such is certainly the case. Is it that the secondary names of American gentlemen generally are bad ones, that the owners would rather not bring forward to the light of public scrutiny? Or is it that the national habit of time-saving impels the citizens of the great Republic to get over the ground in speaking of themselves, as in other matters, as rapidly as possible? It has been this moment suggested to me that Americans are not the only gentlemen marked by the peculiarity in question; and that even I myself have a mysterious initial in the very heart of my nominative system, which I am shy of explaining. But nothing could be in worse taste than to call upon a satirist to look at home before abusing his neighbours.

All American gentlemen are not necessarily ugly, cadaverous likenesses of an ill-omened bird of prey, such as the comic artists of this country love to depict them. Neither are they all such swindlers, liars, and garrulous boasters, as the British comic writer generally finds it desirable to

consider them, for the purposes of "copy." Biglow T. Miles, Esquire, was a good-looking gentleman of thirty, with a face rather plump than otherwise. His eyes were merry and honest, describing when fully opened (as they usually were) two nearly perfect circles. He had a magnificent flowing beard, which he loved to caress. So far from being a boaster or *blagueur*, he rarely opened his mouth, except to speak in monosyllables; and though something of a humorist and a great deal of an observer, was shy and modest to a fault. To counterbalance these un-national characteristics, it must be stated that he was purely orthodox in the matters of very tall shiny hats of the sugar-loaf pattern; of uncomfortable length of limb, necessitating the most indescribable postures; and of unbridled indulgence in the transatlantic practices of chewing tobacco, and "whittling." At the period of Mr. Miles's introduction to the reader, the gunwale of the Fayaway was undulated by various "scoopings," the unwritten log of many coasting voyages. But surely, in a free country, a man may be allowed to whittle his own pleasure boat!

Mr. Biglow T. Miles was the son of a wealthy Georgian planter. He had come to Europe to make the grand tour. Finding himself very comfortable at Longport, the place of his landing—on account of the society, or the hotel, or the whiskey—he had remained there for two years, paying his bill every morning, and always intending to start for the Mediterranean on the following Monday. He had purchased the Fayaway, as a matter of incidental accommodation, just as he would have bought a clean collar to go out to dinner in.

The Fayaway was now returning from an excursion out seaward, the object of which had been to witness the trial of a new American steamer, constructed upon some novel principle. Mr. Miles cared nothing whatever about mechanical science or the interests of commerce, but happening to meet with two acquaintances who did, and were interested in the pending experiment, had volunteered the advantages of his yacht and society.

His two friends were Longport merchants. Two words will depict one of them—Gregory Lynch. The other was a short square jolly personage, whom I may also spare myself the trouble of describing, in detail, by a very simple process: he bore a striking resemblance to Mr. Robert Keeley. I wish I could always express a pleasant meaning by an image so agreeably familiar to the entire British community.

The latter gentleman, who possibly had a respectable business-like surname on the door-plate of his counting-house, but who, in circles of intimacy, appeared to be known only as "Billy," was the jester of the party, and in right of that office, pretty well monopolised the conversation. Gregory Lynch was grimly taciturn. The American seemed to consider Billy in the light of a choice quid, to be enjoyed in silence.

The conversation had turned upon the art of swimming; that is to say Billy had commenced talking on that subject.

"Swim!" said Billy, in peroration of a voluble harangue, of which the text had been his own marvellous achievements in the art of natation. "I'd swim right from here to America, only no boat could keep up with me, and I should founder for want of provisions. Come! for a fair wager—I'll swim either of you two to the North Light and back, and carry the other on my shoulders. It's only two miles. Don't both speak at once."

Both gentlemen declined having connexion with the wager on either of the proposed conditions.

"I forgot—you've both said you never learned to swim," Billy rattled on. "I see how it is—Gregory never thought it worth his while, knowing he wasn't born to be drowned. (You know you'll come to a bad end, Gregory—don't you, old boy?) As for Longfellow, here, there's no water on the face of the earth deep enough to go over his head. I never believed in the sea-serpent till I made his acquaintance, since when nothing in the matter of length and scalliness would surprise me coming from an American source.

How long did it take you to wade over from New York, Furlongs?"

(The personal length of the American was an inexhaustible source of pleasantry to the facetious Billy, who never wearied of ringing the changes on his friend's suggestive surname.)

"It wasn't done wading, Billy," said the States-man, with a roguish twinkle of the eye.

"Oh! I daresay; you'd persuade us you came over by steamer, as if there was a funnel long enough for you to stand upright in! How, then?"

"I jumped it," said Mr. Miles, stolidly, "trumping" Billy with his own weapons.

"Good again! One for the Seven-Leagued Interest. Why don't you laugh, Gregory? Have you been committing any crimes, more than usually, in the way of business lately?"

Gregory forced a laugh, and, as if considering that his want of sociability required some apology, said he had not been well lately, in corroboration of which statement he attempted to get up a cough.

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Billy, shaking his head with mock gravity. "Very bad symptoms, indeed! It's a case of what we used to call *tussis churchyardiensis*, when I was trying to like to be a doctor. You're booked, my dear friend, and had better apply yourself to serious reading at once."

Billy was one of those truly British wags whose *point d'appui* of humour consists of raillery on the most ghastly and alarming subjects. This is a purely Anglo-Saxon quality, and may be considered a specimen of what Kingsley calls "the slow humorous cruelty of the Teuton."

"It's conscience that's pulling him down. I shouldn't like to have what he's got on his mind—should you, Tall-boys? But then you haven't got a mind, so you can't answer. By the way, Gregory, didn't I hear a fellow pitching into you the other night?"

"Possibly," Gregory observed, with a smile of indifference.

"Yes; at a party—up Ash Grove way. You caught it, Sir, I can tell you. Grand-Trunk-Extension here never gave it a nigger half so viciously. It was a nephew of yours—painter or something of that sort. I presume, from the way in which he spoke of you, you had the care of his happy childhood, and embezzled his pocket-money."

Billy said this in his airiest manner, and, as he meant nothing whatever by his words, had no thought of observing their effect on the countenance of Gregory Lynch. The effect itself, though but momentary, was certainly disagreeable.

"He is a foolish lad who has taken a crotchet into his head against me," Gregory remarked, casually. "His father and I had some differences in early life. I have no animosity against the boy. He is very young—and I am glad to hear he is making his way so well."

"Now, Pecksniff, drop it," said Billy. "If you begin to be civil to anybody, you must be contemplating murder at least. Foolish lad! I like that. Because he doesn't like you. If I was a painter, with an eye for the beautiful, and so forth, I'd have your blood for bringing the Ugly into the family! Hi! parasols in a boat! Here, Longman, Rees, and Company, chuck us the glass."

And the volatile Billy, who, though verging on five-and-forty, and of respectable corpulence, nevertheless considered himself a lady-killer and connoisseur of the sex—applied himself to the scrutiny of a distant sail, signalled by the attractions he had alluded to.

"Why, there's old Merripebbles, the stockbroker, and his fat wife," said Billy, with a ship's telescope at his eye; "and a lot of girls. Eh? There seems to be something the matter. By Jove! there's a man overboard—look!"

In the direction where the speaker's finger pointed,

about half way between the yacht and the distant boat, a dark spot was seen, indicating a human head.

"He's all right," said Billy, with the air of a judge; "he's a swimmer. The tide is against him, and the boat seems to be under the management of a deputation from the worshipful Company of Merchant Tailors. But he'll do. No funk about that fellow. I wonder who it is? By the Lord Harry, Gregory! it's the very boy we've been talking of—your nephew. I'd know his head if it was cut off."

Gregory Lynch snatched the telescope from the speaker, white as the sail, and trembling from head to foot. A glance satisfied him as to the swimmer's identity.

"You're right," he said, almost inaudibly. "Is there any danger?"

"Not a ha'porth, old boy," Billy answered kindly, with a possible misapprehension of his friend's emotion. "Don't alarm yourself; he's making straight for the boat, and the tide's with her. That's right, Longitude. We may as well be near him in case of accident."

The American, with ready presence of mind, had altered the yacht's course, at the first detection of the accident. They were now making as straight in the direction of the swimmer as a side wind permitted.

"He'll do—he'll do!" said Billy, in a state of considerable excitement; "they'll catch him, thanks to the tide, and none of those infernal crab-catchers, who are doing their best to drown him. Yah! you fishfags—there's a stroke! He's all right now, Gregory, old fellow; don't alarm yourself. If I hadn't felt sure of my man I should have been overboard to help him long ago."

Billy was not boasting idly. He was a perfect dolphin, or Triton of the deep—as many of our northern coast gentlemen fortunately are—and was as brave as a lion.

The distance between the two boats was materially diminished. The movements of Marston Lynch were watched from the deck of each with equal interest. The three yachtsmen seemed perfectly assured of his safety,

when the screams from the sailing boat, whose explanation we have been so long in arriving at, broke through the evening stillness.

"What now?" cried the American, leaping to his feet.

A dark object like a mass of drapery floated swiftly from the sailing boat, gliding past the nearly exhausted swimmer, and growing smaller every second. Marston Lynch was seen to turn and follow it.

"A girl overboard!" said Billy, in a low despairing voice, dropping his telescope after a brief scrutiny. "Curse them, they ruin everything. Look, Gregory—I can't."

Gregory took the glass again, holding it in his quivering hand with the greatest difficulty. He saw the face of his step-daughter, Lucy Wareing, sink and re-appear three distinct times. A fourth time it disappeared for several seconds. Marston Lynch disappeared at the same time, but was seen again with the apparently lifeless form of the girl on one arm. At the same moment a minute speck was seen to float away from him with the tide. This was the unhappy Charley, abandoned after so much risk to the mercy of the elements.

The reader will remember the perilous position in which Lucy was last described on the edge of the sailing boat. In her nervous eagerness to watch Marston's movements—forgetful of all other considerations—she had lost her slight balance, at the most critical moment, and fallen into the water.

"He's got her," Billy cried, with all his enthusiasm revived; "he's a trump, and shall have a medal for it. Hard a-starboard, Longshanks! we're making dead for them, now. The yacht will catch them quicker than I could. D—n the fellow! he doesn't see us. This way, ahoy! Turn!—this way!"

Billy's stentorian voice succeeded in making itself heard Marston Lynch, encumbered by his new burden, turned in the direction of the yacht, towards which, though further off than his own boat, the current of the tide made it much easier for him to swim.

The girl's clothes, which had kept her afloat at first, were now saturated with water. She was a dead weight on the arm of her preserver. The swimmer's face that Gregory Lynch was watching so intently through the no longer needed glass, was one of intense despair. Marston Lynch, within a few yards of the yacht, was sinking from sheer exhaustion, but no thought of relinquishing his sacred charge seemed to occur to him.

Two of the three beings whose existence had made life almost insupportable to Gregory Lynch, were on the point of perishing before his eyes—one in the other's arms! The excitement of the crisis drove him almost mad.

The warm-hearted American had cast off his hat and coat. Billy stopped him as he was about to leap overboard.

"What are you at, you fool?" he said, rapidly—"You can't swim a stroke. Don't you see we're coming straight upon them. Steady, my lad. Keep up! By G— he's past us: it's time now."

Billy leaped upon the bulwark, and had already commenced a plunge forward, when Gregory Lynch struck him a violent blow on the forehead, that sent him reeling back on the deck, and finally toppling down into the shallow hold of the vessel.

Scared and terrified by the mad act to which his desperate excitement had impelled him, Gregory Lynch fainted.

* * * * *

When he recovered his senses he found the yacht filled with people. The sailing-boat was alongside. Marston Lynch had been saved by a life-buoy, thrown out by the American, and brought on board with his precious charge, by the assistance of the sailing-master and his boy, both expert swimmers. Marston was on deck exhausted, but conscious. The women were applying restoratives to Lucy in the cabin, ably assisted by Howker and the cavalry officer—Biglow T. Miles, Esquire, producing every conceivable necessary from incredible lockers, and making himself generally useful.

Gregory, whose first emotion had been the dread of meeting human eyes, was astonished to find himself the object of much solicitation. He was the centre of a sympathising circle, of which Billy, with a deep cut on his forehead, his face and shirt-front saturated with blood (which he appeared to consider of no moment whatever), was the most conspicuous member—holding forth eloquently to the rest of the company on the recent mishaps.

"You see," he heard Billy say, "the poor fellow didn't know what he was about. I'd no idea he was so tender-hearted. Mad as a March hare, I give you my word: Longman, old boy, you saw him knock me head over heels to prevent my jumping overboard, just because I'd done the same thing to you. But then, I could swim and you couldn't; and then, when he thought he'd done wrong, fainted slap! Hi! he's coming to. Holloa! Gregory, old brick, it's all right! Both safe as the bank."

"Thank God!" said Gregory, shuddering,

"Oh, I dare say," said Billy, glad to return to his facetious principles, when he found all danger over. "That won't do. We've just been saying how obvious it was that you wanted your nephew and step-daughter to be drowned in order to inherit their property. Hi! what's the row? Gregory, old boy, I was only joking. He's fainted again. I'm d—d if I ever make another joke as long as I live."

Gregory *had* fainted again.

The yacht put in at the nearest landing-place on the Longport side of the river. All available conveyances were chartered for the transport of the sufferers to their various homes. Marston Lynch was conveyed to his lodgings in a fly, under the auspices of Howker and Miss Crooze, who on this occasion defied conventionalities, and wept all the way. She, moreover, rendered herself unsightly by despoiling herself of all outward garments—such as mantle and victorine, in favour of the patient—which acts of self-devotion only served to pile up the admiration of Howker on the principle of compound in-

terest. Gregory Lynch was taken to his own house, his especial driver being exhorted to the greatest care by Mrs. Merripebbles, who thenceforth boasted of her wealthy kinsman as a model of sensibility and affection for at least six weeks. Lucy Wareing remained at the nearest hotel, in charge of Miss Carlton and her mother.

"Billy!" said Biglow T. Miles, Esquire, to his friend, as they walked leisurely towards the York Hotel, with a view to the nocturnal cigar, after the fatigues of the day.

"Holloa!"

"You didn't ought to have said that to Lynch."

"What?"

"About his wanting to drown the young 'uns, to come into their property."

"Well, but hang it, a joke's a joke."

"Now and again it is, perhaps; but sometimes it ain't."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I mean this: that nothing's a joke, so long as it's true. *And by the living Hookey, that was; or there's no snakes!*"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Billy, whistling and looking more like Robert Keeley than ever.

Two days afterwards Charley was brought home by a speculative fisherman, who considered five shillings and a remarkably large glass of rum ample recompense for saving a life whose imperilment had nearly cost the sacrifice of two interesting human creatures, and the premature termination of a startling history. As we may not have occasion to allude to our four-footed friend again, it may as well be stated that a four miles' swim had done him a world of good, and was probably the means of fortifying his constitution for the incredible longevity to which he has already attained.

CHAPTER XII.

MARSTON LYNCH TO DON SANCHE DE SAUMAREZ, CARE
OF MONS. JULES LAGRANGE, SOHO SQUARE, LONDON.

LONGPORT, *June 22nd*, 18—.

My dear Sir,—And yet I don't half like "dear Sir," though I have tried every other form of address. "My dear Don" was too off-hand. Not only did "My dear Sancho" appear too familiar, but, saving your presence, I can only bring myself to believe Sancho to be a real name away from Don Quixote. Such are English prejudices that no advantage of travel can remove! "My dear Saumarez," was too manly for a cub like me. I had a shy at "My dear Friend," but that put me in mind of a correspondence I used to conduct for the poor dear governor (about one of his inventions that were to roast larks in the air, and connect this planet with the moon—bless his dreamy old memory!) with some Pennsylvanian Quakers in the paper trade; and the memory of those gentlemen was "a caution." I think if you had a decent English name I could venture to call you by it. But in the meantime I am obliged to fall back upon the conventional "Sir." Do suggest a means for its abolition in your next, as it makes me very uncomfortable.

We have had terrible doings here since you last heard of me. Moving accidents by flood and field; I might almost say, battle and murder, and sudden death. In the first place I should tell you, the Merripebbles tribe has struck its tents. Sloped, sir! Vamosed, bag and baggage, and

are off to Florence. Old Merripebbles received sudden orders from the commander-in-chief to sell his business and cut. Wasn't he glad, rather! Won't he be jolly, pottering about Italy, eating grapes, making little puns on the shopkeepers' signs, and tourists' vocabularies, and groaning over the enormities of the Catholic religion?

But I should have told you the cause of their sudden exodus. However dreadfully out of order, I must do so now. And yet I scarcely know how. It implies the necessity of a terribly long story, of which *I* am the hero; a *bonâ fide* hero, I assure you; rescuing young ladies from death; inspiring tender passions in impracticable quarters, and I don't know what all. I am trying to laugh over the matter; but I confess it is with forced merriment. I am awfully frightened of boring you; but, as you have shown such an unmistakeable interest in my welfare, and requested me to keep you informed on all my movements—at the risk of being tiresome—I must tell you of what has recently happened.

* * * * *

[Here follows a lengthy account of so much of the incidents detailed in the last two chapters, with their apparent causes and consequences, as came within our hero's immediate observation. A few pardonable reservations are made on the subject of Miss Crooze and Charley; nor do we find the slightest allusion to the cavalry officer. Still, the material facts are stated from the writer's point of view, much in the order in which they have been already placed before the reader. In the good old times the chronicler would have been permitted to avail himself of this document *in extenso*; which, being written with all the grandiloquent fluency of a young gentleman just beginning to feel his crowquills, might possibly have proved the reverse of uninteresting. But in the present day, time and printed space are precious; and the said chronicler must content himself with the extraction of such fragments as are absolutely indispensable to the development of the

narrative—(a necessity to be lamented, as the letter would have filled the number admirably). The chronicler may be allowed to state that Miss Crooze is only once alluded to by name, and that, casually and in terms of humorous disparagement—a fact that may be taken as indicative of some change in our hero's wayward affections.]

* * * * *

Well, would you believe it? because that queer girl Maud—(I don't suppose you remember her, or if you do it does not matter, as she gets too long for her frocks every day, and can't be a bit like what you do remember)—because she happened to be the only person on board with any presence of mind, and didn't want to see me drowned if it could be helped, old Mother M. must take it into her head that there "was something between us," as the maid-servants say. A likely story! However, the old girl called on me in the morning—as I thought, naturally enough, to inquire what sort of a night I had had after the perils and the dangers they were all past. Not a bit of it! She had come to bid me good-bye, with any amount of solemn you please. They were off to Florence. The dear old lady minced matters no more than usual. After Maud's conduct of the preceding day she said it was impossible for them to remain in Longport as long as I was in it. There could be no mistaking Maud's feelings towards me. (Feelings in a pinafore! How romantic!) She wished me well, and wouldn't for worlds injure my promising prospects; but I must be aware that I was no fit match, &c., &c. Did you ever hear such bosh! However, it isn't a very pleasant thing to be suspected of harbouring mercenary designs on a school-girl's fortune, is it? I protested, with what I suppose was "becoming indignation"—said I had no intention, and so forth; in short, to clinch the matter, I let her into the secret of a predilection in another quarter. (As that has come to quite a *timely* end, I needn't bore you, or humiliate myself, with the particulars.) She shook her head, and said

she knew all about that—(*how*, it puzzles me to guess, as I never mentioned it to a soul)—but that I was very young at present, and would soon know my own interests better. I offered to go to London, or Manchester, or Timbuctoo, if she liked; but she would hear of nothing of the kind. All their plans were made up. They were to leave the country. Maud, contrary to all expectations, had consented to the arrangement, and it was advisable to take the young lady while in the humour. What a desponding condition my white muslin, bread-and-butter adorer must be in, eh? However, I musn't speak ill of her. I certainly owe her one, for acting as an amateur Grace Darling in my behalf. They say she swore like a trooper, threatened to brain people with marlin-spikes and what not. Rather alarming symptoms, don't you think so? Howker (whom I have mentioned to you—one of the best fellows in the world, though a bit of a pleb) said she put him in mind of Joan of Arc, and he'd have followed her through fire or water. Howker is loose in his history, and I suspect the salt-water associations led him to confound Joan with Noah's Ark. With all becoming gratitude to Joan for her exertions, it strikes me that the Darby whom Fate may have in store for her had better prepare himself for some rough weather. It is very certain that *my* name is not Darby.

Well, we saw the last of them yesterday. Though I had been forbidden the house, I couldn't resist the temptation of rushing out to say good-bye, as the last fly drove up the lane. The old girl cried and kissed me, and told me I ought to hate her for being a wicked, mercenary, worldly, unchristian wretch, and that she had a good mind to turn back and unpack everything, and that I might console myself with the knowledge that Maud would be miserable for life, and grow up a bad heartless woman. What a rum source of consolation! And what a rum old girl she is! Still, I am not ashamed to confess that I felt very much inclined to commit suicide, when I saw the last of her darling old broad shoulders disappearing round the

corner of the York Road I don't care how long you may laugh, but I tell you candidly, I cried for three-quarters of an hour.

I hope you are not quite asleep, as I have not yet come to the real purport of my letter. That has reference to the man whom, as you know, I hate with what Mrs. M. would call unchristian malignity. I don't care what you have said, or may say; I am like the poet who

———"in a golden age was born,
With golden skies above,
Born to the hate of Hate, the scorn of Scorn,
The love of Love."

I don't think this is a very golden age, and I have never noticed any particularly golden phenomena in the skies of my native Longport. But if there is anything in this age, or under those skies, more particularly hateful and scornful than anything else, it is my respectable Uncle, Gregory Lynch. He is a bad man—worse than you will believe, or than I could have dreaded. I am not speaking now from mere temper: the thing has become too grave.

I am convinced that what his friend (can such men have friends?) said in jest, *was founded upon truth*. I am certain, not only from his conduct on this occasion, but from other evidences, that he has robbed or injured that poor child—in such a way as to make her very existence a burden and a reproach to him. There can be no doubt that he *tried to prevent my saving her life!* Is it not horrible to think that she is absolutely dependent on him? If, as I suspect, he is in possession of property lawfully hers (most likely descending from her mother, whom he tyrannised over and killed), is her life safe in his hands? Who would care to know what had become of her? What being would have the courage to prefer a grave charge against so wealthy and worshipful a personage? I only know one—that is, I think I know him—if it be possible to work out the difficult problem of "Know thyself." I have not forgotten that to Gregory Lynch I

owe the great blank of my life; that my mother died too early for me to preserve her memory. This may make me a rancorous adversary: at any rate, it will make me a dangerous one. I will watch him closely, and if I find that this poor child, whose life I have been the providential means of saving at the risk of my own, and for whose happiness I feel, strangely enough, to have become thereby responsible—(I suppose whatever is worth saving is worth guarding); if I find he has accomplished or meditates the slightest wrong against her, let him beware! I stuck to her in the water as long as I felt there was life in either of us. I intend continuing the process on earth. I am a bit of a fatalist, and whatever influences criminally-acquired wealth may bring to bear against me, I think it has been proved that I was not born to be drowned by Gregory Lynch.

They have elected the fellow a town councillor. He is about to be made a country magistrate—(on the strength of landed property—whose, I wonder?) I was almost self-persuaded to get out an ironical poster at his election, recommending people to vote for Lynch, "*the model brother and husband*." I would have done it, but for the sacredness of the *souvenir*. As it is I have done something. When I heard of his appointment to the bench (the idea of such a man sitting in judgment on criminals!) I knocked off some verses headed "Midas," and signed "Apollo." Cool to call myself Apollo, wasn't it? But it helped out my notion. I took the ground that Midas was made a judge *after* he had displayed a power of turning everything into gold, and for that reason only, and that it was utterly vain on the part of Apollo (meaning the bard) to invest him with asses' ears. Nobody could see them for the dazzle of his surrounding gold. The thing wasn't very good, of course; but I think you'd like it, if only for its ferocity. Well, I sent it to the *Longport Flail* (a paper opposed to G. L. in politics: you will receive a copy with this). Would you believe it, sir? They not only inserted it, but I had a complimentary note from the

editor, pointing out two or three more subjects I might treat in the same stinging manner. Of course I did them immediately. I wish that sort of thing would pay; for, really, a man might be doing something better than painting stockbrokers' clerks' wives at three pound ten a head—and not doing them creditably. By the way, have you ever thought over any of those dramatic notions I told you of on board? I daresay you have forgotten all about them. Still I should like to do something in that line, if a judge like yourself would give me any encouragement as to my chances.

And now (having bothered you beyond the licence even of your friendship), I will spare you.

Believe me, my dear Don Saumarez (I don't like that compromise either),

Yours, with the sincerest gratitude for all favours,

MARSTON LYNCH.

ANSWER TO THE ABOVE.

Long's Hotel, London, June 25, 1856.

My dear Marston,—*Honneur aux braves!* A few days ago I should have said *Que vivan los bravos!* but as you will see presently, I have found it necessary to change my mother tongue. As you couldn't manage to be familiar with me under a Spanish name, try what you can do with a French one. To explain: I am rather under a cloud at present, and wish to observe a sort of partial *incog.*, for family reasons. Consider the eccentric individual now addressing you as going by the name of Eugène Delorges. It is a pseudonym I adopted a few years ago in this country (though one to which I am partially entitled by maternal descent: we date from *the* Delorges, and quarter the—— but never mind that rubbish), when I took up, for amusement, with some literary pursuits which I am

momentarily compelled to resume for profit. This necessity, however, will soon blow over, and I shall never have the incentive to become a great author (if I had the power) that will, no doubt, soon make you one.

Go a-head! in whatever you feel to be your vocation. Don't leave Longport at present. You will find it (don't let your youth feel insulted) a good nursery ground. Pitch into Uncle Gregory if you think it good practice—though I dare say he is not half so bad a fellow as I like you for considering him. I know what very young blood is—remember I am verging on the detestable thirty—and should despise you for tolerating any wrong, real or fancied. However, knowing the world, I don't mind admitting that it is just possible there may be some little screw loose between him and the pretty step-daughter, such as your ardent sympathies may have imagined. If so—as I believe I can form a more correct judgment of the motives of your knight-errantry than yourself—(knowing that impetuous young gentlemen do not usually fish attractive young ladies out of the water without after consequences)—I should be very glad, for your sake, to see it set right. However, let us act with caution. Let me have the names of Mr. Lynch's two friends of the yacht. I know a good many Americans in Longport—perhaps *the* one. If G. has smuggled a little of his step-daughter's money, he can easily be persuaded to make it good under proper representations, *especially in favour of the young lady's future husband*, that future husband being a gentleman with a turn for satirical journalism. In the meantime I am sorry for the departure of the Ash Grove family. You have hinted that they were Miss Lucy's best friends, and made things agreeable to her. I am afraid if that young lady should be placed in an unusual pining condition, she will have such claims on your sympathies as will preclude all possibility of attention to Literature and the Fine Arts. It is true you will be able to paint Marianas in the Moated Grange—and write touching poems on the subject of Captivity. The great advantage

of Art is, that the painter can pay his debts by a picture of the interior of the Queen's Bench ; and the author can renovate his constitution with the price of an amusing work on bile.

I am off to the Continent for a few days. It is post time, and I must conclude. Address to me here. All letters will be forwarded to me. Always your friend and admirer,

S. DE SAUMAREZ ;

(or, for the present,)

EUGENE DELORGES.

(Whichever you please, my pretty little dear ; only put the latter on the *outside* of your letters.)

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH THE LADY OF SHALOTT YIELDS TO TEMPTATION AND LOOKS OUT OF WINDOW.

A FEW days after the memorable water party, Marston made a morning call on the object of his affections. Miss Crooze had been summoned to Longport on business; and our hero was hospitably and fascinatingly received by Miss Fanshawe, the assistant governess, in her superior's absence. Marston had never seen Miss Fanshawe before, except at church, where her somewhat arduous duties of whipper-in to a dozen very little girls, perversely inattentive to the more abstruse questions of theology, placed her rather at a disadvantage during sermon time. He was now greatly struck by her eyes and conversation. The former were blue and capacious, the latter was sprightly. Her remarks upon middle-aged spinsters generally, and those in a scholastic position especially, betrayed great knowledge of the world. She was very lively upon black *cosmetique*, and a toilette institution known as "the Tweezers," in a manner which Marston, as an embryo satirist, was bound to appreciate. There was also a vein of sentiment about Miss Fanshawe to soften any acerbity that might be perceptible in her more purely intellectual phase. Her eyelashes, which were very long and silky, quivered and glistened as she spoke of young girls in living prisons, without friends or protectors, and at the mercy of jealous elders. She alluded feelingly to an adored mother and an

estranged brother, with an excusable glance at certain departed family splendours. She was resigned though, and would be even happy in her present position, if she could only meet with common appreciation; nay, the absence of misrepresentation alone would satisfy her. Finally she brightened up suddenly, and expressed her conviction that Mr. Lynch must think her very stupid. For what had he to do with her grievances? After all, Miss Crooze was one of the best creatures in the world—having her tempers, no doubt; but it became the young to be tolerant of such feelings. She (Miss Fanshawe) had tried to please—she would admit, from interested motives, as Heaven knew, she wanted a friend sorely enough. Perhaps there was a want of natural sympathy. It was very kind of Mr. Lynch to sit and talk to her. She never spoke to a soul but children and menials.

Marston Lynch fell in love with Miss Fanshawe, and out of it with Miss Crooze. He was very much ashamed of himself—his habitual condition through life; but he could not help it—another of his prevailing weaknesses. His chief aim during this juncture of his existence being to keep out of the way of Miss Crooze, whom he felt he had wronged deeply; there were natural difficulties in the way of his seeing much of that lady's subordinate, his new idol. Accordingly, things had not gone very far between them, when our hero was pulverized by the discovery that a wealthy Australian Sexagenarian (of convict origin), who had come to England for a wife, with only a week to secure one in, had signallized Miss Fanshawe in church one Sunday, proposed to her on the following day, married her on the Wednesday, and embarked with her for Melbourne on the Saturday.

From the outset of these events, it was observed that Miss Crooze abruptly neglected her toilet. She complained openly of rheumatism, and wore ungainly head-dresses of knitted fabric. Several complaints were lodged, by scholars, of increased snappishness in the lady's temper, rapidly becoming unbearable.

All of which signs were patiently and with satisfaction noted by Howker, as indications that his long-coveted matrimonial prize was depreciating in market value, and gradually coming within the reach of his humble means.

It was a bad day for the Lady of Shalott when that abominably dashing Sir Lancelot came swaggering and jingling past her window. She couldn't help looking out at him—the fellow was so confoundedly attractive! She knew well, that to fulfil her destiny, she ought to have sat still in her chamber, weaving his image as reflected in her magic mirror on her magic tapestry—just as though he were a mere abbot on an ambling pad, or an apple-woman in a red cloak. She knew that if she once attempted to look out into the actual world, her mirror would crack from side to side—and that her weaving occupation would be gone for ever,—that nothing would be left to her but to launch her boat with the stream, to sail down to Camelott, never reaching it alive—and die on the way singing feebly—earning nothing but an off-hand prayer for her soul from the object of her futile martyrdom.

Is the above too mystic and unintelligible? Very possibly. I should like to have as many readers as Tennyson. I know I have not; but still, there must be a considerable number who read even me, who know nothing whatever of him. There are more people who own high-mettled chargers, than who habitually travel by the three o'clock Whitechapel omnibus. What then? Have I any right to insult and mystify such as are good enough to travel by my little twopenny halfpenny conveyance, by talking to them about the speed and paces of a Tennyson—

I am afraid I am not getting the wheels of my vehicle out of the mud of mystification alluded to, very rapidly.

On the contrary, I feel them sinking deeper and deeper every moment. Besides, you know as well 'as I do that secretly, and in my heart, I don't think Whitechapel of myself at all. And why should I be so absurd as to consider it bad taste on your part, to read my—well, let us say, amusing productions? You know I believe to the contrary. We are both clever fellows, that is the long and short of it; and if you don't care about reading Tennyson, it may possibly be that you have another favourite author rather absorbing to the attention, and whose style, if less pretentious and florid, may possess certain minor attractions which——

[Here the reader interrupts with an indignant cry of "Now then, stupid!" The writer, overwhelmed with confusion, is made to feel that he has escaped from the frying-pan without successfully reaching the hob. He again changes his tactics.]

In that beautiful poem, then, reader, with which we have both been so long familiar, which may have been intended by the author (our mutual favourite) for nothing more than an exquisitely simple fairy tale, an ingenious friend of mine, years ago, pointed out a symbolic meaning, that might possibly astonish the bard himself. That friend (who being an Artist and a Poet himself has a right to be heard on such a subject)—that friend represented the Lady of Shalott as the type of the artist's nature and vocation. She was doomed to a solitary and laborious life—but oh! a life of endless charms and consolations if faithfully persevered in. She was to sit with her back to the window, and never turn round, under the penalty of a fearful curse. But she was provided with a wondrous mirror that reflected all passing behind her—that was the Artist's mind—her privilege. She had to weave the sights of the world, she was not compelled or permitted to mix with, on a magic web—that was the Artist's canvas or writing desk—her ground of task-work. To neglect her task, was to forfeit her privilege. She grew "half sick of shadows," in her solitude. One shadow more dazzling than the rest crossed

her mirror. She could not help but glance out on the reality. The glance was destruction.

She made three paces through the room,
She left the web—she left the room—
She saw the water lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelott.
Out flew the web, and floated wide,
The mirror crack'd from side to side,
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The lady of Shalott.

Have I explained my friend's meaning, and has it helped to a tardy comprehension of my own? Has it made you feel a sad foreboding, that my poor weak, sensitive easy shuttlecock of a hero—has been already dazzled by a vision of passing glory—inducing him to turn his glance from the life of peaceful contemplation and glorious labour in which we have seen him embarked? He has got impatient with his artist web-work. He is sick of trying to paint shadows, and not succeeding to his satisfaction. The Lancelot that has lured him from his study is Literature—not the Literature which is Art and Peace—but that which is Turbulence and Action. He has been pleased with the success of his miserable little newspaper philippics. He has been patted on the head and praised for clever bits of satire on subjects for which, in his heart, he cares nothing. He has begun to criticise pictures in a Longport Journal. He is trenchantly severe on better painters than himself. His eyes are precociously opened to the faults of his own works. Unfortunately, the habit of fault-finding is not the best groundwork for self-improvement. His own easel is despised and neglected, not without secret and shameful yearnings after the good path he has quitted. He has become a clever critic. He is "Young Lynch," the Longport Prodigy. He is to astonish the Londoners one day with his slashing manner. He persuades himself that he is pleased with the prospect. It is strange, though, that at his age, and with his gentle nature and simple training,

he should jump so readily at the distractions of admiring "society,"—none of it society that he secretly cares about. He goes to vapid soirees and even riotous tavern assemblies, where he shines immensely, it is true. He takes no quiet walks with Howker now. He is as unwilling to be left alone with that mute counsellor as with his other deserted friend, the paint box—which has not been dusted for a fortnight. He has in fact—

"Look'd down to Camelott;,"

in his progress towards which tumultuous city it now becomes our duty to follow him.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH TIMBER IS PROVIDED FOR ERECTING THE
LONGPORT "WHIPPING POST."

MARSTON was rushing down to the *Longport Flail* office, in a great hurry with some "copy," being a stinging article on the then Mayor of the town, with whose person and character the writer was wholly unacquainted; but the "facts" and line of treatment had been furnished by his editor. One of our hero's greatest claims to the honours of periodical literature, was the rapidity with which he could express himself with *verve* and originality on any given text. I will do him the justice to state that he never in his life (which became a sad one, with many grinding temptations) wrote a line against his honest convictions. But he was, unfortunately—especially at the early period we now treat of—a terrible weathercock in the matter of opinion. He was easily swayed by kindness, and, as he was a sadly vain fellow, flattery was always a kindness to him. So he got flattered dreadfully.

As he was hurrying past the corner of the York Hotel, his head-long career was unceremoniously arrested by a far from gentle rap on the crown of his hat, administered by an unmistakeable walking-stick.

Marston turned round angrily—he was keenly resentful

of insult by nature—and witnessed a very remarkable sight.

Seated on a round and commodiously-surfaced stone post, was a very long gentleman with his very long legs curled ingeniously round the extempore throne, so as to preserve a somewhat difficult equilibrium. A very shiny hat was held on the extreme back of his head by the exercise of less explicable prehensile powers of muscle. According to the received laws of gravity it ought to have been rolling in the gutter; but it held on persistently. The gentleman was smoking an overgrown cigar, and “whittling” an expensive walking-stick.

We presume the reader has already recognised the sketch. The original was no other than Biglow T. Miles, Esquire, enjoying his fourth cigar on his favourite post, on to which he was accustomed to climb, not without personal risk, every morning after breakfast, remaining there (wind and weather permitting) during the great portion of the forenoon. The attractions of this particular post, as an easy and eccentric point of observation of coming and going life in Longport, were supposed to constitute by no means the feeblest tie that bound Mr. Miles to that city. Certain it is, he was faithful to it. Even the cutting strictures of the Longport boy population (and the Longport boys “chaff” exceedingly well for a provincial town) failed to shake his constancy. It is true that halfpence were no object to him, and black mail may have had something to do with the impunity he enjoyed.

“Holloa!” said Biglow; having arrested our hero’s attention in the unceremonious manner described.

“Holloa!” Marston replied, mollified in an instant. He did not recognise the speaker, but the good-humoured face of the American assured him at once of friendly intentions. The precarious position of the latter, moreover, was ample excuse for his not risking any hasty attempt at the ordinary means of salutation.

Having secured his man, Mr. Miles proceeded to unwind himself, and descend from his elevation. He then deli-

berately shoved a cigar, companion to the gigantic specimen he was smoking, into Marston's mouth, and shook hands warmly with him, inquiring how he found himself.

"Really," said Marston, awkwardly; "you have the advantage—"

"Ah! I forgot—River, you know—ducking business—"

This lucid explanation was sufficient. Marston recognised the hospitable owner of the yacht "Fayaway;" apologised and shook hands again.

Mr. Miles, with deep satisfaction, then looked at him all over in silence for a few seconds. This investigation concluded, he propounded the following question:—

"Going to paint?"

Marston replied, that he should probably do so in the course of the day.

"Then come on, now."

Mr. Miles started off in the direction of a back street. Our hero followed wonderingly. Thoughts of commissions from a wealthy patron revived his affection for the deserted paint-box.

Mr. Miles led the way to the bar of a neighbouring tavern; when they had entered, he laconically requested Marston to "name his colour."

The hero of these pages then understood that "to paint" in the Miles vocabulary, meant to restore and fortify the inner man with alcoholic stimulus.

He accordingly named his "colour."

His colour was a very mild one then. I believe he named "sherry and cloves," or some similar nauseous compound, such as humane publicans appear to keep on their shelves for the purpose of frightening away—by the infliction of severe bilious attacks—very young gentlemen from a too early acquaintance with the mysteries of their unhallowed shrines. Marston too rapidly learned the use of much stronger colours to be found on the same palette!

Biglow T. Miles, to follow out his own metaphor, was an experienced artist, accustomed to the most corrosive gments, which (as he probably would have expressed it

himself), he was in the habit of "laying on thick," with an utter scorn of that feeble diluent medicine, water. He made known his chromatic wants on this occasion by the monosyllable "Scotch."

A very large glass had been filled with neat whiskey ere he had spoken, and placed before him as a matter of course. Mr. Miles, equally as a matter of course, returned it empty, in a second, to be refilled; and, as a third matter of course, emptied it again.

Having fortified himself with this second coating, as it were, Mr. Miles leaned his back against the metal counter of the bar, supporting himself by his elbows (doubled up as if he had been pinioned), and slid his legs as far forward as possible on the floor, as if ambitious of reposing their extremities on the opposite window cill—some four yards distant. In this comfortable attitude he felt prepared for conversation, and even took the initiative by inquiring—

"Well, how's things?"

Marston replied, that things were unusually flourishing; and, a little flushed with the sherry and cloves (though he seldom wanted such incentive to loosen the floodgates of his speech and confidence at the first comer's bidding), launched into a glowing narration of his recent successes. He informed his entertainer that he was beginning to make a position in literature—that was to say, a position for a young man; specified certain articles that had won praise from stern editors of many years' standing; finally, he requested Mr. Miles' attention to the article he was just taking down to the office, which he read with fine inflections of the voice and exuberant gestures, from beginning to end. Mr. Miles applauded, and considered it a fitting occasion for another "Scotch", in which he pledged our hero's future success. Marston was delighted. I am afraid, if nobody else had been there, he would have read the article to the barmaid!

Marston took another sherry and cloves (if, indeed, it was not noyeau: I will not be sure: he was very ill the next

day, at any rate), and became more talkative. He thanked Mr. Miles in a neat speech for that gentleman's exertions in saving his life, and subsequent hospitality to himself and friends, which told so severely on the long American's modesty, that another coating of Scotch became indispensable.

This disposed of, he picked himself up (at the great risk of dislocating his shoulders), and looking down on our hero—much like a good-natured crane at a frog, whom he had determined to spare and make a friend of for the future—addressed to him the inquiring monosyllable—

“Dine?”

“How do you mean—?”

“To-day.”

Marston admitted that he intended performing the interesting operation alluded to in the course of the twenty-four hours,

“Now?”

Well; the day was certainly getting on, and our hero felt something like an appetite. But he had first to leave his copy at the printing-office.

“That all?”

“All.”

“Then come on.”

Biglow T. Miles, Esquire, strode out of the bar as he had entered it, Marston Lynch following. They rounded the corner and ascended the massive steps of the York Hotel, which, as everybody who has visited Longport knows, is a much handsomer building than Buckingham Palace. Marston noticed, as they mounted, certain light brown stains on the otherwise spotless stones, arranged with no contemptible eye to artistic pattern, which he was at no great loss to attribute to the morning exertions of his new friend. Mr. Miles had, in fact reinforced himself with a new quid on leaving the bar, and was observed to give the mosaic a few finishing touches as he passed.

Marston knew that this was not the way to the printing-office, and that his copy ought to have been in half-an-hour

ago. I think I have already indicated, as a salient point in his character, that "he couldn't help it!"

When they had reached the splendidly-paved and gilded entrance hall, Mr. Miles, signalling an attendant with a motion of the forefinger, uttered the brief command of "Boots," and led the way upstairs to his private sitting-room.

Thither the boots followed them, and was commissioned by the American to convey Marston's manuscript to its destination, greatly to the author's relief. He felt he would never have taken it himself. The waiter was then summoned—the best-dressed and most gentlemanly man, Marston thought, he had ever seen in his life. Mr. Miles ejaculated,—

"Dinner."

"For yourself only, Sir, or does the gentleman dine with you?"

"Two."

"Very good, Sir—may I ask if you have any selection to make?"

"Everything—first chop—and lots."

"Thank you, Sir. Immediately, I presume?"

"Now."

"You shall be attended to, Sir."

The waiter seemed not only gentlemanly, but necromantic. He was back in a few seconds, superintending the laying of the cloth by a numerous staff of under waiters—who seemed like well-paid curates obeying the paternal instructions of a firm but considerate dean. This seemed to occupy no time whatever: and the freshest and hottest of soup was served immediately. The other courses followed in succession as rapid as was necessary—the gentlemanly waiter pervading all the arrangements, like a bland chaplain whose blessing was practically efficacious.

It was the first real *diner de luxe* Marston had ever partaken of. He had long been accustomed to ease and plenty, amongst comfortable middle class people; but this excess of splendour and indifference to cost was something

entirely novel to him. He was not a glutton; and I believe he was more charmed by the lights, the ornaments of the room, the lavish plate, the beautiful glass, and above all by the flattering homage of well-organised anticipation of his every want, than by the endless variety of meats and wines he partook of. Certain it is that he was charmed and intoxicated (I don't mean the latter in its literal sense; though, of course, that came on also, in the course of the evening.) There was moreover the immense charm of the kindness and real good breeding of his host; the very awkward eccentricities of whose external manner obviously arose from an impossibility, in his nature, of affection of any sort. Had Marston been feasted with double splendour, by an ostentatious *parvenu* (such a one, for instance, as he loved to represent his uncle Gregory), or had he felt that he had merely been retained for the purpose of amusing a *blasé* millionaire—a kind of motive which your clever fellows are too apt to set down any civility with which you may treat them—he would have felt uneasy and resentful. As it was he could not help feeling enraptured with the splendid hospitality of the self-indulgent good-natured American—who was so obviously incapable of insulting or humiliating even a waiter!

Not the least enjoyment of the evening was in the fact that our hero was allowed to have all the talk to himself. He liked that immensely, I can tell you. And when a few choice vintages had been wasted on him (not on Biglow though, by no means) his glibness was unbounded. He told his host more about his past life than I could have told you, up to the present time, if I had every page of the "Train" to myself from the first line of the first number (a condition which might have interfered materially with the sale of this now tolerably prosperous publication). He let out all about Miss Crooze—nay more, all about Miss Fanshawe, which case was more trying of review from its recency. He gave a funny—but, it must be admitted, complimentary—sketch of Howker, as a humorous type of English middle-class character, curious to the

Transatlantic student. He recited many hundred verses of his composition—Biglow T. Miles paying homage to each ode by a copious libation. He was intensely proud of his acquaintance with Don Sancho de Saumarez, more especially on a hint that his host was slightly acquainted, and, as it appeared, not unfavourably, with that patrician. He was, of course, bitter on the subject of Gregory, in whose side, he intended to be a thorn of Satirical Literature; as soon as the oppressor in question should achieve such municipal dignity as would make him worth assailing. What he wanted, though, to effect this, and other purposes of similar patriotic moment, was an organ to himself. Editors were prejudiced and identified with parties. He wanted a weekly sheet where he could, as he expressed it, "kick up his heels"—where he could write honest satire (which he could illustrate himself with caricatures on wood, by the way) pitch into humbug generally. But, however, it required capital.

At this juncture, Mr. Biglow T. Miles got from his chair, or rather from his three chairs, for he had been sitting on one with each heel supported by another, and rung the bell.

"What's the matter?" Marston inquired, stopping with a rather vacant stare. He had advanced to that after-dinner stage, when it is not advisable to interrupt the fluency of narration. Recovery of the thread in such cases becomes troublesome.

"All right," was Biglow's reply; "go-a-head."

Marston found some difficulty in going a head. The instantaneous entrance of the gentlemanly waiter, did away with the necessity of his doing so.

The gentlemanly waiter, who, although it was getting late in the evening, appeared newly-dressed and combed, —probably his carriage was at the door, to take him to an aristocratic party,—waited respectfully, but not abjectly, for instructions.

"I want some more Pomard," said Biglow, "and a printer."

"And—I beg your pardon, Sir?"

"A printer."

"Certainly, Sir; a master printer, or a journeyman?"

"A master."

"Very good, Sir" (if the Emperor of all the Russias had been called for, it is doubtful if the gentlemanly waiter would have been surprised by, or wholly unprepared to meet, the order). "I am afraid at this time of the evening it will be difficult to meet with one. They mostly live out of the town."

"Send, and look."

"Of course, I shall do so, Sir. No doubt some of them will be detained at their offices by night-work. I will make proper inquiries. Pomard, I think you said, Sir?"

The gentlemanly waiter sent up the Pomard immediately, and the master printer soon after. Possibly he had a bin of master printers in his cellar, and merely assumed difficulty of supply, as an excuse for overcharging for the luxury. However, the master printer was introduced and supplied with Pomard.

I will not describe the master printer this month. My friend William M'Connell gave you his portrait last month—and it was excellent; his shirt-frill and protuberant stomach were to the life. He was represented seated opposite to Messrs. Lynch and Miles, waiting to know what important business had induced them to send for him at that unwonted hour.

Perhaps some of my readers (I don't mean you proverbially gentle one) will remember a foot-note that explained the premature appearance of the engraving alluded to—which they will only be too eager to bring into court against me. They will suspect that I had *not* then written the chapter which was assumed to be only standing over for want of room. Upon my word I had. But, as a warning to printers and editors, if they should presume to keep my copy standing over this month, I have put the concern to unheard-of expense in writing the chapter over again.

I have so amplified the result of Marston Lynch's encounter with Miles, that I am obliged to leave off on the very threshold of the subject of that picture. If they keep me "standing over" a second time, I shall re-write it again, at ten times the length. So, reader, if ever you want to get over that particular incident in my story, you had better write letters to the editor, imploring him to give my copy that consideration as to time and space to which it is fairly entitled.

[P.S. I hope you are not sorry that I altered the chapter at all—on the hypothesis that it might have been better, because shorter, as it stood.]

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH THE LONGPORT WHIPPING-POST IS ESTABLISHED, AND THE NATIVES BEGIN TO CATCH IT SMARTLY.

THE master printer showed himself a man of keen business habits, by finishing his magnum of pomard before speaking a word, thus securing an actual good while in his power, lest the business in hand should prove of a nature calculated to place matters on a less amicable footing.

"Well, gentlemen," he inquired, (setting his glass down to be immediately refilled by the hospitable Biglow), "and in what particular direction can I have the honour of serving you?"

Possibly his long intimacy with books had inspired the master printer with an ambition to talk like one. At any rate he did so on all occasions to the best of his imitative ability.

Biglow came to the point at once, and said, "We want to start a paper."

"A paper—good!" The master printer frowned thoughtfully, and held his head on one side, after the manner of a grave bird.

"Daily or weekly?"

"Weekly, I suppose—eh, Marston?"

"Weekly, of course."

"Weekly—good! A daily experiment in this town would have brought you to the verge of ruin in a fortnight;

gentlemen. I give you my word of honour. It has been tried—twice. Take my advice, gentlemen, and make it weekly.”

The master printer said this benignly—with the air of one giving philanthropic counsel at considerable sacrifice of his own interests.

“But,” he added, after a pause, looking up from a brief consultation with his second glass of pomard; “the market’s full even there, gentlemen. It is my duty, as one intimate with the question in all its bearings, to warn you that the market is full.”

Marston observed that the proposed undertaking would not be likely to clash with any existing interests.

“Just what I was about to do myself the honour to observe,” said the master printer, with a graceful bow. “With new capital and enterprise—with new blood, if I may be allowed the expression, gentlemen—with principles in accordance with the requirements of the age we live in,—a weekly journal might not only command innumerable fresh channels, but” (the master printer’s warmth caused him not only to break down a little in his peroration, but to forget his exordium)—“you might beat the whole blessed lot out of the field in no time!”

Marston explained. The new enterprise was not intended to be a newspaper, but a satirical journal.

The master printer looked rather sorry. He had possibly been indulging in visions of printing expenses—considerably narrowed in their prospective circle by this elucidation. However, he gulped down his disappointment with some pomard, and looked up sideways again.

“A satirical journal? Good! There is unquestionably room for a satirical journal in this metropolis of northern commerce, if I may be allowed the expression. But, gentlemen,” he continued, with a second burst of candour, “it has been tried before.”

“Indeed?” Marston inquired.

“It is my duty to tell you that the experiment has been tried before—on two occasions. There was the *Longport*

Quiz and *Figaro in Longport*—both failures; I lost by *Figaro* myself, considerably.”

“But,” Marston asked, “were not the papers you speak of (without offence to you—I did not know you had been connected with either) of a low and scurrilous character, depending on slanderous exposures of private life, rather than on the castigation of public vices? Were they not conducted on principles of black mail or extortion from obscure, timid people, afraid of having their names brought before the public in connection with some ridiculous or disgusting charge?”

The printer had waved his hand to and fro with a smiling countenance while Marston was speaking, in sign of anticipatory acquiescence.

“The gentleman has been kind enough to express my very thoughts, to frustrate, if I may be allowed the expression, my very words,” he said sweetly, as if making Marston a present of those valuable articles in the most handsome manner. Pre—cisely—that was exactly where it was. Scurrilous and low were the words. Extortion and black-mail were the principles, as the gentleman very justly, and with great propriety, shows. Such things, for instance, as ‘It is not true that young Mr. Jenks the counter-jumper at Manchester House, was seen kissing the carrotty-headed milliner of Elizabeth-street, over the garden railings, at two o’clock in the morning.’ *That* was not satire, you know. And, ‘Things to be admired!—Widow Jones’s little green bottle, with the greasy cork, in the corner cupboard. Young Snobbins’s patent leathers, that creak to be paid for.’ You can’t call *that* sort of thing castigating public vices, gentlemen.” The speaker concluded, looking round with a triumphant air, “I defy anybody. It’s impossible.” And the master printer settled the matter with a most conclusive pinch of snuff.

“Of course we should avoid anything of that description,” Marston said.

“Of course,” acquiesced the printer, paddling the air as before; “and that’s where you would hit them. You

would take entirely new ground. You would give them something quite different to what they have been accustomed to—”

“If they’ve been accustomed to anything like what my young friend here can give them—I’ll eat them without salt,” Biglow broke in, warmly, his enthusiastic partisanship lending him unusual volubility.

“I don’t in the least doubt it, Sir,” the printer assented, with one of his best bows. “The gentleman’s powers are perhaps not wholly unknown to me. Young Mr. Lynch, I believe?”

“My name is Lynch,” said Marston, with a confused bow.

“You are known, Sir—well known in this town. Honourably, moreover. And now I see clearly with whom I have to deal; if a satirical paper can be started, ensured of a supply of such writing as young Mr. Lynch can give us” (Marston, in his confusion, drained Biglow’s glass of neat brandy in mistake for his own wine, and nearly choked himself with coughing), “why the thing is safe, Sir. Safe!”

The master printer looked round fiercely in remote corners of the room, as if in search of concealed disputants, to be annihilated on the spot.

“And pictures—don’t forget that,” said Biglow; “that will be something new to them.”

“Pictures? Do you mean to tell me the work will be illustrated?”

“In first chop style.”

“Ah! if that could be done?—why, it’s going with greased wheels. But excuse me, gentlemen”—and the speaker assumed the air of one about to propound a poser—“Excuse me, gentlemen; where’s your talent?”

“Here,” roared Biglow, slapping his *protégé* on the back with a force that made the glasses dance on the table.

“Bless my soul, you don’t mean that young Mr. Lynch——”

"Hasn't his match with the pencil," said the American, who took our hero's artistic powers for granted, on the latter's own representations.

Marston modestly explained that he was an artist by education; that he had some little practice in drawing on wood in America; and that if an engraver could be found in the town capable of doing justice to his drawings, he had little doubt of making a weekly caricature on some local subject of the week—a by no means unattractive feature in the proposed periodical.

The printer shut up and pocketed his snuff-box, with the air of a man who has nothing more to say. He smiled an apology for helping himself to another glass of pomard, which he eyed against the light enjoyingly for some seconds.

"Thompson's your man," at last he said, briefly.

"Who is Thompson?"

"A wood-engraver from London—a pupil of Ebenezer Landells—not a bad guarantee, gentlemen. Now the question is, when can he have the first drawing? Thompson requires time to do an artist justice, and a good start is everything."

"You are satisfied with our prospects of stability?" Marston faltered.

"Yah!" said the disinterested printer (Marston thought him so) with a testy movement of the head—"Am I satisfied with the stability of the Pier Head? You will do me the justice to admit, gentlemen, that I carefully mentioned every obstacle in your way. I'm sure anything that could be done in the way of cold water I did it. You can't say I encouraged you. I am not a sanguine man by nature—and when you first mentioned the speculation, I confess I didn't see it. Not one atom, gentlemen. But now you bring such an array of convincing arguments—now I hear what it is to be like—gentlemen, I haven't been five-and-twenty years feeling the pulse of this town without knowing a little of its constitution. It will hit them, Sir—safe as the Bank—safe as the bank of young Mr. Lynch's respected uncle."

The printer treated young Mr. Lynch with one of his best bows. He was evidently under the not uncommon impression that to address people in the third person singular, is a very subtle delicacy in the art of conversation. We are possibly indebted to the chronicles of Parliamentary eloquence for this nuisance, in company with many others of a more serious calibre.

"Don't call him my respected uncle," said Marston, petulantly; "I don't respect him, for one."

"You don't!" cried the printer, whom the pomard was gradually warming into a state of *naïve* joviality,—"*True, I remember—Judge Midas, in the Flail—devilish good it was, too. Then, in that case, I don't mind confessing myself that I hate the beast.*"

The two friends laughed heartily.

"He's a bad lot, Sir," the printer went on; "opposed to all rational improvements in the town, and might have got me some of the Council printing to do, as easy as look. But he'd see me hanged first."

A fresh burst of laughter greeted this candid confession, in which the printer joined, helping himself to the last half glass of pomard, and putting his legs on a chair—as if he lived there.

"Well, old boy," said Biglow, tossing a cigar case to his new acquaintance; "and what's the figure to be?"

All the faculties of the man of business were aroused in an instant. The printer took out a note book—and, though his cigar rolled about in his mouth unmanageably, his hold on the pencil was firm, and his eye keenly awake.

"I suppose we'd say crown size?"

"Certainly," said Marston, who had acquired some knowledge (a very slight one) of printing-house technicalities.

"Twelve, or sixteen pages?"

"Twelve." Our hero had a London model-publication before him.

"And we'd go to press with not more than two thousand—to begin with?"

The two gentlemen, who had not the means of forming the slightest opinion on the subject, agreed, gravely, that it would be preposterous to think of more as a commencement. They would have given the same opinion had the proposition been for five hundred, or for twenty thousand.

The printer made a few brief calculations on a leaf of his note book which he handed to Biglow—his instinct readily pointing out to him which was the capitalist.

Biglow barely glanced at the amount, which he saw would be by no means ruinous, even without the slightest prospect of returns, and acceded to it without inspecting the details. He referred the contractor to Marston for all instructions, contenting himself with a general command to "get on a-head."

The printer's attempts to conceal his exultation were deplorably futile. He had possibly satisfied himself as to Mr. Miles's position and solvency beforehand, as he asked no impertinent questions on the delicate subject.

"A moment," he said, with a radiant air, poising his note book in one hand and beating time with his pencil in the other; "let us not forget, gentlemen, this is a matter of speculation. I am as much interested in its success as either of you. It isn't often business matters are commenced so agreeably, and I hope for continuance of present understanding." (A bow.) "You, gentlemen, invest respectively your money and talents." (Another.) "I, also, should like my little risk in the matter, if you will permit me. Perhaps young Mr. Lynch will be good enough to answer me a few questions?"

Young Mr. Lynch assented by a movement of the hand.

The printer commenced a course of interrogation after the manner of electors badgering a candidate on the hustings.

"May I ask if young Mr. Lynch is prepared to take the popular side on the Paving and Lighting Question?"

"Certainly," replied Marston, who had no idea what the question meant.

"All right," said Biglow, who was dozing, and had not been listening.

"Good." The printer made a note and continued: "Is young Mr. Lynch disposed to support the new street from Petersham Square down to St. Martin's Docks; or—if I may be allowed the expression—to pitch into it?"

"Well, really," Marston began, "I have given so little attention to the matter—"

"You know it's an infernal shame! and they oughtn't to do it," suggested the printer, quickly.

"Send it to blazes, Marston!" said Biglow, with an incipient hiccup.

"Good!" and the printer made another note, apparently satisfied with the capitalist's instructions, and continued—

"Will young Mr. Lynch go in for the more extended representation of tradesmen in the Town Council,—at present monopolised by the merchants?"

"Decidedly," replied the Editor.

"All right," said the Capitalist.

The printer put up his pencil and pocketed his note book.

"In that case, gentlemen," he said ("a little brandy-and-water with your permission, as the wine is out—wishing you good health and every success), if such views are to be adopted, so convinced am I of the brilliant future before us, and so anxious to respond to the gentlemanly manner in which I have been met (gentlemen, towards you again) that though I have put down my estimates at the lowest figure—still, till the paper has quite reached paying point—gentlemen, *I'll knock off the machining!*"

Neither Marston Lynch nor his patron had looked at the item of machining, or had the slightest conception of its probable importance. But they had arrived at that stage of the evening when statistics are superseded by emotions. There was something so intensely magnanimous

in the printer's manner of conceding the boon (whatever it might have been), that they at once looked upon him in the light of a benefactor. They rose simultaneously; grasped him each by a hand, and promoted him to the rank of friend on the spot.

Biglow T. Miles, Esquire; Marston Lynch, his friend of half a day's standing; and the printer, his other friend, of scarcely an hour's acquaintance, made a convivial night of it.

In the above manner was the foundation laid for the once famous weekly journal, still possibly remembered in the vicinity of its birth; to which it was decided that same evening, after much incoherent discussion, the name of the *Longport Whipping Post* should be given. All preliminaries were recapitulated and settled in the coolness of the following day. Biglow was to be held responsible for all expenses (the celebrated item of machining provisionally excepted, which our friends were a little disappointed to find by no means heavy); Marston, for all contributions, illustrations, and general management. The American, whose generosity never stopped at half measures, insisted on paying our hero a weekly sum for his trouble, till the sale of the paper should yield compensatory profits. After this, the property was to be made over to the young Editor as a present.

It need scarcely be stated that, to the easy-going Virginian Sybarite, the speculation was of no more importance than his yacht or his horse; the mere freak of a moment to be abandoned at another. It was a pleasure to him to feed the hobby of a clever and interesting lad who had been thrown in his path; and Biglow had never been trained to deny himself any pleasures he took a fancy for. Fortunately he was one of those rare egotists, whose selfishness embraces a very large circle of the human family: his favourite indulgence (and the one he spent most money upon) was in affording pleasure to others.

With Marston Lynch the case was different. He looked upon the new field so unexpectedly opened to his exertions

as a rare chance in life—which very possibly it was. He entered upon his duties with a feeling of trembling responsibility. He was at first utterly daunted by the task before him. Who was he? What right had he to claim the public attention? Above all, where could he find enough to say to fill the dreary waste of blank paper that stared him in the face? He soon got over all this. At first, when he had written a slashing prospectus and drawn a fantastic title-page, he felt completely aground. For two or three days he could only manage to send to the printer's some laboured paragraphs, which he was horrified to discover occupied in type scarcely any space at all. But the practical habits of his new friend Prebble (so was the printer called) speedily rallied him. That business-like individual sent boys to him for "copy," with brief notes saying so many columns must be in by such a time, also suggesting subjects for treatment, in an off-hand matter-of-course manner. These communications all breathed such confidence in our hero as an established literary power, that his very pride urged him to respond in a becoming manner. As he covered slip after slip of paper, he felt alarmed at his own growing power, not of writing brilliantly (Marston, at a much later period of his life, has been heard to say that he never had any opinion of his own writings till he had completely forgotten them: then, he would occasionally find, in turning over old pages, snatches that rather surprised him by their goodness, and the discovery that they were his own), but of working himself into a state of excitement on utterly uninteresting subjects. This facility of forcing sympathy or indignation where they had not previously existed, shook his faith in writers that had gone before him. It was his first step towards cynicism. But the exigences of the press and the delights of production soon absorbed all other considerations. The young writer saw a goodly printed sheet filled almost exclusively with his own compositions. By the time he had spelt, over and over again, every line, he was firmly con-

vinced that each word had been dictated from the depths of his heart's sincerity.

The early days of the *Whipping Post* were by no means the least happy of our hero's existence. He had a snug little room to himself in the neighbourhood of the printing-office—fitted up at the expense of his patron with the most orthodox editorial appurtenances. These were a source of long enduring delight; and here he was treated with supreme respect by all comers. Hither Mr. Prebble, who was of a chirpy and sanguine disposition, would come several times a day in high spirits, which he imparted to our busy hero, by glowing accounts of the sensation they were already creating, and loud encomiums on the excellence of the copy as it was rapidly sent in. The furniture soon began to show signs of repeated visits from Biglow with his unsparing knife. (The carpet had been thoughtfully selected of a warm Cavendish tint, and therefore preserved its colour.) The Virginian, indeed, spent the greater part of his time in the Editor's room, which he kept plentifully stocked with luxurious provisions. His long form was soon favourably known in the neighbouring bar parlour, where the most unexceptionable "Scotch" was kept in un-failing supply. Biglow was much taken by the mysteries of the printing-office, where he was idolised in return; and where a growing tendency on the part of the operatives to join incorporated temperance societies had seemed unaccountably checked with his advent, and was certainly followed by a most decided reaction. He was always at hand, with his imperturbable good temper, exhaustless generosity, and, above all, unchanging approbation, to encourage Marston in his labours.

Nearly the whole of the work fell on our hero's shoulders. Numberless provincial talents had been pointed out to him as likely to render him valuable assistance: These certainly had been profuse enough in their offers and experiments. Prebble knew, at least, a dozen fellows of unsurpassable smartness. Howker volunteered the collec-

tive services of the entire composition class of the Literary and Scientific Institution to which he belonged—who published (for presentation) a miscellany, selected from the Society's album, once a year, to the admiration of a hundred tea tables. All these aspirants would have given their ears to appear in genuine print; and it pained Marston sadly to refuse their contributions insertion. But they were, for the most part, sad trash; he was true to his artistic instincts, in the fastidious balance of which they were found so terribly wanting. He fell back on his own resources, and made two or three dozen bitter enemies to begin with. He received some little assistance from a very unexpected source—from no less a personage than Biglow himself. The worthy Virginian had not one spark of vanity or ambition of any kind in his whole composition. But he was a bit of a humourist, and frequently struck out in conversation queer scraps of American character and observation, which Marston eagerly seized and committed to paper—by no means to the detriment of the number in progress. Prebble was useful, too, but rather embarrassing. As a red-hot local politician he was invaluable; but for his guiding counsel, Marston (who was a mere puppet in his hands in this department) would never have had an opinion to express on matters relating to the Body Corporate of Longport, whose proceedings he secretly loathed. But as an ambitious wag Prebble was troublesome. He would bring suggestions purporting to be facetious, that made the perspiration stand in cold beads on our hero's forehead, in his futile endeavours to discover their point. Sometimes the ambitious printer would hit on a tolerable joke, which Marston was only too delighted to please him by inserting. But his general doom was the waste-paper basket. Prebble was a philosopher, however. He consoled his wounded vanity by a reflection that all men of genius were "cranky," and was too magnanimous to let his blighted hopes abate one jot his admiration for our hero's character and abilities, which was boundless.

and genuine—and continued so throughout their queer acquaintance.

The first number of the *Whipping Post* made a decided sensation. Its most prominent attraction was a page-size caricature, consisting of a group of local magnates (who had been pointed out by the patriot Prebble as the sort of men to be held up to loathing and ignominy), in convict attire, and with their legs chained together. The subject was entitled, "Waiting for the Whip." Marston had been very happy in most of the likenesses, and the engraver had done him full justice. The appearance of a tolerably executed wood-cut, embodying a subject of local satire, was certainly a novelty in a provincial town. It is needless to say that, prominent among the group of malefactors, the artist had represented his own uncle—a very monster of ludicrous deformity. Gregory also cut an important—of course not favourable—figure in the text. Marston had been regretting that the number would have to make its appearance, and his detested relative be let off with no more severe punishment than one or two insignificant paragraphs—which he considered by no means adequate to the culprit's deserts. But just on the eve of publication, he was informed that a column was still wanting. His topics and invention were tolerably exhausted. He took up an unopened newspaper, just arrived, and glanced over the report of a Town Council Meeting on the previous day—in search of any name or subject on which to hang either pun or parody. He saw the name of Gregory Lynch, and was interested in a moment. Gregory's evil genius—or perhaps Marston's good one—had prompted the former to oppose a municipal grant for some proposed Public Baths and Washhouses, on the score of necessary economies. This was enough for our impetuous hero. His uncle had dared to oppose a sanitary measure of the highest public necessity; he seized a pen, and the printer's devil had to wait a very short time indeed for the following tremendous effusion :—

LYNCH LAW.

A GREGORIAN CHANT.

(The Honourable Member for the Tape-street Ward loquitur.)*

Your worship, sirs! upon my word
 I'm floor'd, astonish'd, puzzled, vex'd, too;
 What, talk of cleanliness!—absurd!
 Do, pray, reflect, on what it's next to.
 What, scrub the people's greasy polls
 Cooling their brains—to think they've souls?
 Of tell-tale water grant supplies
 To wash the dust from out their eyes?
 Combs are lost on mangy cubs,
 Soon you'll change your cry, I hope:
 Burn the mangles! smash the tubs!
 Down with water! no more soap!

Bethink ye of the dire effect
 Of cleansing all the population:
 They'll hold each polish'd nose erect
 Sniffing ideas above their station.
 Will folks, who spotless garments don,
 Among the mud be trampled on?
 Besides clean hands would make them shirk
 For us, their share of dirty work.
 Combs are lost on mangy cubs,
 Soon you'll change your cry I hope:
 Burn the mangles! smash the tubs!
 Down with water! no more soap!

Why, sirs, when this good town was young,
 Think you that any present magnate
 Had left the mud from whence he sprung,
 Had he not let the waters stagnate?
 Who, with a clean and healthy home,
 To plough the seas for us would roam?
 Who'd steal us slaves, save slaves for pay,
 Body and soul as dark as they?
 Combs are lost on mangy cubs,
 Soon you'll change your cry, I hope:
 Burn the mangles! smash the tubs!
 Down with water! no more soap!

* Gregory Lynch represented the Cape-street Ward in the Longport Council Chamber. The term substituted was meant in galling allusion to his former occupation.

A limpid draught from well or brook
 Awakens thirst for cooling knowledge :
 A snowy shirt suggests a book ;
 From washing-tubs they'll want a college.
 These unborn wants to satisfy,
 For time and wages mere they'll cry :
 Our giant fortunes put to route,
 The universe will be *wash'd out* !
 Combs are lost on mangy cubs,
 Soon you'll change your cry I hope :
 Burn the mangles ! smash the tubs !
 Down with water ! no more soap !

In addition to the above magnificent tirade levelled at his uncle's conservatism (Marston was quite mistaken by the way : Gregory was a moderate liberal in politics—his opposition to the washing question was a mere matter of temporary expediency), our hero dashed off the following "stinging" paragraphs, which he instructed the printer to distribute in various parts of the number:—

"THE GREAT WATER 'PARTY.'—The objections of the Honourable Haberdasher for Tape-street, to the proposed Hydraulic Improvements are easily understood. He cannot bear the idea of any *pump spouting* but himself."

"A REMARK IN 'EROCLES VEIN.'—A wealthy councillor (the origin of whose fortune may not be so Black as it is painted) has expressed a determination to crush the Public Baths and Wash-houses scheme, which (in his inimitable playful manner) he speaks of as the *Hydro-headed monster*."

"QUITE A NEW VIEW OF IT.—It appears we are wrong to assume that the distinguished opponent of public cleanliness is at all actuated by a spirit of malevolence towards the lower orders. He says what he has done is entire'y for their good. Scrubbing cannot be beneficial to them, as *he remembers having once received a good towelling himself*, and he didn't like it at all."

And then the required column was complete.

The first number realised a *bonâ fide* sale of fifteen hundred. Prebble was in ecstasies. He declared that he had never known anything *within such a close shave of paying expenses* in his life.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. GREGORY LYNCH SEES COMPANY.

MR. BIGLOW T. MILES's favourite post—I do not allude to the *Longport Whipping Post*, but to its proprietor's daily seat in front of the York Hotel—was found by that gentleman most convenient for purposes of study. It was not only his social observatory, but his reading room also. It amounted to a positive calamity when a wet day compelled him to digest his *Times* in the coffee-room, instead of on the eminence he loved.

The sky was cloudless on the morning of the *Whipping Post's* first appearance. Biglow, cheered by the favourable omen, had brought his honorary copy (printed on fine paper, and sent by special messenger to await his rising, on the breakfast table) uncut into the open air, in order to enjoy it thoroughly. He had mounted his throne, round which his legs seemed to entwine like ships' cables, without reference to conventional anatomy, and was soon luxuriating deeply in the new sensation of contemplating a work of literature in the production of which he had been himself concerned.

The mere smell of the wet ink and paper had afforded him unmixed satisfaction for some time. This beginning to pall a little, he betook himself to cutting the leaves slowly, and regarding each page separately as a mere

artistic effect of light and shade. He tried numerous devices of folding and opening. He looked at the paper, as a whole, from various points of view,—at arm's length, with his eyes half closed, with his head nearly upside down. He inspected the wood-cuts minutely: he was much impressed by the ingenious process of "cross-hatching." The result of all these experiments was a conviction that the *Whipping Post* was a publication calculated to inspire admiration and envy, and one without which no gentleman's library could possibly be complete. The literature—of which he had read every word in the proofs—he reserved as a *bonne bouche*. Having exhausted all external attractions, he commenced deliberately with a tailor's advertisement at the top of the title page (which struck him as being rather well written), and proceeded to go straight through the work without missing a line. He had got to the second page and was beginning to feel rather literary than otherwise at the discovery of one of his own "notions," felicitously dressed up by Marston, when a pleasant voice, close to his ear, was heard saying,

"Mr. Miles, from Virginia, I think?"

"All right," said Biglow, fairly toppling off his perch in his astonishment at a challenge that reminded him of his distant home.

When he had recovered his legs, and a portion of his composure, he found himself confronted by an elegantly formed and dressed man, of the middle height, whose appearance, at the first glance, was extremely youthful, but at a second, considerably less so. His face was eminently handsome, and ornamented by a graceful jet-black moustache. The black was obviously not genuine. At the first glance you would have thought it the device of a vain youth aspiring precociously to the honours of manhood. At the second, you wondered whether it might not be necessitated by an obtrusive and possibly premature grey hair or so. The stranger's clothes were faultless as to fit and material, though of apparently studied plainness.

The one or two unobtrusive articles of jewellery he wore

were evidently of great value. Altogether, the man's aspect was refined and prepossessing.

"I know your face, but I don't remember you," said Biglow, always blunt in speech, but courteous in manner.

"And yet I have not forgotten a very delightful evening I spent in your society, some four years ago, in New York."

"By Jove, yes," said the American, shaking hands warmly, "dinner with those jolly fellows of the theatre. I'm delighted to see you, and—hang me if I can remember your name now."

"The name I then bore is not worth the trouble," said the stranger, with a frank smile, "as it was not my own. I was simply making an ass of myself as an amateur actor, and had the grace to spare my family a little. Permit me to introduce myself by a name which, I trust, I am no longer doing anything to make ridiculous."

And the stranger, from a handsome filagree case, presented a very thin enamelled card, on which was engraved in the French manner, without any titular prefix, simply the name—

"SANCHO DE SAUMAREZ,"

surmounted by a crest.

"To be sure," said Biglow; "I remember now. *Don Saumarez*, I think?"

"That is my name when I am at home, as the Irishman says," answered our old acquaintance, laughing. "I find the distinction rather a nuisance in this country, and have ceased to make use of it—except," he added with some dignity, "in event of my claim to it being disputed. Have you any particular business to occupy you this morning?"

Biglow's round eyes became like an owl's with astonishment. His countenance broke slowly into an expansive grin. The idea of *his* being occupied by particular business at any time was a much better joke than any in the *Longport Whipping Post*.

He replied that he was a perfectly idle man, as usual.

"Then, will you walk?"

The Mexican offered his arm, which Biglow accepted, instinctively turning in the direction of his favourite bar round the corner. He considered this happy meeting with a gentleman of whose social qualities he had such pleasant recollections, an historical event, to be celebrated in the choicest colours of his own favourite school of painting.

The elegant Don Sancho expressed not the slightest astonishment or uneasiness at being led into the obscure tavern. He, moreover, took kindly to his paint, knocking off, to the admiration of his entertainer, a small glass of fiery whiskey, in sporting phrase, without turning a hair. He was a gentleman of cosmopolitan accomplishments.

"A very fair glass of whiskey," he said, with a frown and smack of a connoisseur; "but vastly inferior to our *pulque*."

"What's that?" asked Biglow eagerly, pricking up his ears at the suggestion of an untried drink.

"A Mexican spirit, distilled from the prickly pear. That diluted with half Scotch whiskey, would make a fair glass of grog."

Biglow meditated a moment on the propriety of at once abandoning his long-deferred trip to the Mediterranean, and taking the first ship to Mexico. He sighed, and thinking it best to cling to present good, proposed a second glass of Scotch.

"No," said Saumarez decisively; "it's against my principle to drink in the morning;" and then he added, quickly divining that an admission of systematic temperance would lower him in his companion's estimation, "it's a ruinous plan, depend upon it. It quite spoils you for the evening."

Biglow admitted that there might be something in that. But not being of so calculating a disposition himself, and never having found his evening's amusement at all interfered with by his morning's refection, took a hasty nip.

by himself and followed his newly-found friend into the street.

The Mexican took his arm, and they walked in the direction of the business part of the town.

"You may think our meeting of this morning an accident," said the former after a short silence: "it was not so."

"No?"

"I learnt you were here from mutual friends. In the first place—

"Marston, I suppose. He told me he knew you."

"From Marston, precisely, whose handiwork I see you have got hold of there—very smart and clever it is too, full of boyish ferocity, but none the worse for that. By the way, he is deeply indebted to you; few lads meet with such a friend to start them in life. However, I also have my ambition to serve him in my quiet way. It is in his interest I am now taking you this pleasant walk."

"Glad to hear it," said honest Biglow. "How?"

The reader has already had some inkling of Don Sancho's *penchant* for sudden "effects" of conversation. On the present occasion, he looked his companion full in the face for some seconds, in silence, and then said slowly—

"I want you to come on 'Change with me, and shake hands with Gregory Lynch."

The Virginian withdrew his arm, and stopped, with a look of displeasure.

"I know your objections," pursued the other; "and you are wrong. Till that day on the river" (Biglow started), "you were Gregory Lynch's frequent guest, and as frequently his host. Since then you have avoided him in a most marked manner, your motive for doing so being a suspicion too horrible to be lightly entertained."

"Who told you of this?" asked the astonished Virginian; "I never mentioned"—

"No matter; let it suffice that I know it—and you admit it. You believe that in preventing your friend from

saving his nephew and step-daughter, he was conscious of what he was doing?"

"He gave Billy a back-hander with the aim of a prize-fighter, and the face of a devil," added Biglow with a shudder.

"I am aware of it. Marston has got hold of the whole story—not from you, I am convinced—and takes exactly your view of it. It terrified me at first, I admit. But, as a friend of the family, I have taken some pains to sift the matter, and I am convinced you are both wrong. In the first place, consider the effects of a panic on one wholly unused to physical dangers. I lately saw a man come out of a burning house, into which he had rushed to save his own child, with something enveloped in a shawl which he guarded like a demon. It turned out to be an empty salt box. I could multiply cases by hundreds. A drowning man will not only catch at a straw—he will push away a plank from him to get hold of it. The next question is one of motive. Why should Gregory wish for the death of either of the young people? There seems no question of inheritance at stake. The girl's mother's property he sacked legally as her husband. With regard to Marston, the old man (Gregory's father) died intestate. Nearly all his property was freehold: the son inherited. Such little personal property as there was, was duly divided—and Marston's share duly wasted by his weak visionary of a father. Remember, if you are doing the man an injustice, it is a most fearful one."

"True: I fancied I had kept all this to myself, but you have so completely taken me off my guard"—

Don Sancho smiled a smile of satisfaction. Perhaps the taking people off their guard was an art he had studied, and he was flattered by the compliment of success.

"Understand me," he resumed, "I am no bosom friend of Gregory Lynch. God forbid there should be any sympathy between me and such a man. I am forced into a hollow business connexion with him, which takes the outside forms of friendship. But if I despised him more

than I do, I would take some pains to clear him or any other man of the fearful suspicion you have attached to him, or—which I should like as well—to bring the suspicion to a certainty. But I believe and hope it is groundless. It is on Marston's account, however, I would seek to bring you into contact with him. You are greatly respected in this town for your social qualities, and, it must be added, for your wealth. You are known to be the lad's great friend, and your continued coolness towards his uncle would widen the breach between them, perhaps irreparably. I do think of my poor young friend's future. I am not a sentimental man:" (Don Sancho whipped something away from his eyelash as if he was ashamed of it, and his voice dropped a little), "but I love the boy as a brother. I think I see in him promise—of what I might have been myself: pshaw!—that's not the question. He will make his way in the world—with friends—not otherwise. You are a mere bird of passage: here to-day, gone to-morrow. So am I. Besides, I have not your means—at present, at all events. Left to his own resources, with his rich uncle for an enemy (which Marston is doing his best to make him), what is to become of the poor fellow?"

"You're a devilish good fellow yourself," said Biglow, a little confused in his reasoning, but willing to sink every consideration in his desire for Marston's welfare. "Come along."

"You will meet Gregory as if nothing had happened?"

"If he likes."

"Why he can hardly be aware of your repugnance, as yet, at all events. My object was to nip it in the bud. Certainly, he can not attribute it to its real motive, unless, indeed,"—the Don gave a slight shudder,—"but I will not think it possible. Do not let me, however, persuade you to do anything against your convictions."

"All right," said Biglow, urging him on uneasily. "Let's go."

"If you adhere to your suspicions, in God's name do

not let me shake them; on the contrary, if you believe there is justice to be done, let me rather assist you to do it. Or if you think I have penetrated into your thoughts unjustifiably, I give you my honour that what has passed between us shall be sacred."

"Go a-head," said Biglow.

They walked towards the Exchange. Don Sancho changed the conversation, and spoke pleasantly on various general subjects. Biglow was ill at ease. The noise of deep surging water buzzed in his ears as he went along, and a wan despairing face in the agonies of death, side by side with another, that death seemed already to have kissed, accompanied him like attendant phantoms.

The Exchange flags of Longport form a very pleasant lounging sort of promenade in the fine sunny weather; and if you think the Longport merchants men of too grave and business-like a character to enjoy its advantages thoroughly, you were never more mistaken in your life. They have a good deal of fun there, I assure you. It is true they do not possess the inestimable privilege of closed doors, enjoyed by their neighbours of the Stock Exchange, whose practical hilarity, I am informed on good authority, does not even stop short at Leap-Frog and Follow-my-Leader. Nevertheless, the merchants and brokers, ship or cotton (any of whom would discharge a clerk for whistling in business hours), have their little practical jokes and friendly interchanges of banter, which no amount of public scrutiny can wholly deprive them of. Above all, they are careful not to overwork themselves: knowing their importance as the main props and stays of a commercial country, they make a point of confining their own exertions to a little talk among themselves in the early part of the day, leaving to underlings (regularly paid for the purpose) the care of working out all laborious details—the unimportant one of spending the money excepted. This prevents too great a wear and tear of their valuable constitutions, and is the means of preserving them to the community, for which we can never be sufficiently thankful.

The only drawback, in fact, to the pastoral delights of the Exchange flags (the gloom shed by an occasional bankruptcy excepted) is rather an undue preponderance of leisure. The merchant princes—like many other terrestrial potentates—sometimes find it rather difficult to get through the morning. Biscuits, sherry, and the daily and weekly papers are of some slight assistance; but these diversions are limited. It will therefore, be believed that the advent of any new source of amusement is hailed by the assembled elders of commerce with all the rapture of innocent hearts—not to say of schoolboys. This was a principle thoroughly understood by those astute observers, in all communities, the news-boys; a strong detachment of which sagacious order, within ten minutes of the first issue of the *Longport Whipping Post*, made its appearance with large unopened bundles of that infant publication, which were readily disposed of.

The merchants were delighted—especially those who were not satirised in the journal, and whose friends were. Gregory Lynch's appearance on 'Change was the signal for a shout of exultation; that is to say, among such of his *confrères* as were rich enough to take that liberty: the poorer merchants bowed respectfully and made way for him, retiring to obscure corners to gloat over the paragraphs in his disfavour among themselves. The remorseless Billy, who with a foreknowledge of the impending fun had come early on purpose, singled out his victim at once. He seized Gregory by the button-hole, and held him captive while he read aloud, in mock heroic tones, and interspersed with marginal remarks in his own uncompromising style, Marston's most withering phillipics. A select audience of Longport magnates formed a circle round the pair, and contemplated the slow torture of their friend with unbounded rapture. One venerable old gentleman, with a very purple face (reputed to be worth a million or two), was obliged to give vent to the exuberance of his delight in a series of short standing jumps, with his hands thrust deep in the pockets of his inexpressibles.

Gregory bore it pretty patiently. He appeared pre-occupied and uncomfortable, but from some more remote cause. Latterly he had been greatly complimented on his improved looks and spirits. Things had, in fact, gone smoothly with him. His speculations had succeeded. He had heard nothing more of Don Sancho, and had begun to hope there was some hitch in that gentleman's case against him. With regard to the river adventure—a slight reference to what has been already said on Gregory's substitute for a conscience will satisfy the reader that he soon felt easy on that score. Finding his conduct attended by no after inconveniences, he readily persuaded himself that he had acted unintentionally—that he had lost his presence of mind, and so forth. In a short time he would probably succeed in believing that he had lent valuable assistance to the sufferers rather than otherwise. The only thing that served to keep any uneasiness alive on this head was the unmistakeable coolness of Biglow, which he was at no loss to attribute to its right cause. But he knew the American was a discreet man, and not given to babble. Moreover, he would doubtless soon leave the country. The volatile Billy, upon whom all impressions were evanescent, had rapidly forgotten his friend's dark suspicions, and treated Lynch as formerly. Altogether Gregory had been easier in his mind than for months past.

This morning, though, there was a decided change in him. He was pale and absent. He scarcely heard the wondrous facetiæ, quoted or improvised by Billy, that elicited such peals of laughter around him. He began to be fatigued, not by the remarks of his satirist, or their commentator, but by being held to one spot. His ear was mechanically following the chorus of Marston's metrical onslaught—which Billy had adapted to a chaunt of his own invention, and was declaiming vigorously—when he felt the touch of a light whip-handle on his shoulder.

He turned round and beheld Don Sancho de Saumarez, his handsome face radiant with friendship, hanging amicably on the arm of Biglow Miles.

"How do you do?" said the former, rapidly thrusting out his hand, which a slight compression of the brows over the keen authoritative black eyes commanded Gregory to accept amicably.

Gregory obeyed, wondering why he did so.

"My friend Miles, it seems, you are already acquainted with," said Saumarez in his blandest tones, at the same time wringing Lynch's hand significantly.

The ground seemed to reel under the unfortunate merchant. A friendship between those two—what could it bode? He found himself shaking hands with Miles, and uttering words without coherency.

A new surprise was in store for him, and not him alone. Billy looked up from his paper, in which he had been pointing out a choice morsel to the purple-faced old millionaire.

"Holloa! Longshanks!" he cried; "and Saumarez with you. Why everybody seems to know everybody else! How are you both?"

Billy shook hands with them both heartily.

Gregory Lynch and Biglow were equally astonished at this new intimacy.

"I fancy my acquaintance with my friend Miles is of longer date than any of yours," said Don Sancho. "Lynch—a word with you. I have just come from Genoa, and brought you a message from our friends, the Merripebbles. Gentlemen, excuse us a moment."

And he led the bewildered Gregory to a short distance from the group, with gestures of the most easy intimacy.

"I'm not afraid to trust myself with you, you see," he began; "*as we are not on the river*, I am not frightened. You received my note?"

"I received a bit of tomfool theatrical mystery, signed by somebody, saying I should see him to-day," the merchant growled.

"You knew perfectly well it was from me. It was signed with my name, Sancho de Saumarez—a name it recommended you to speak of with respect on all occasions.

Don't forget that. You see that man who accompanies me?"

"Well?"

"You know him. He is a man of integrity and honour, things you don't value; but also a man of wealth, a thing you do. He has shunned you lately. You know why."

"I don't understand—"

"You do. Don't let us enter into particulars; it is not a nice subject. I have acted in your interest to-day, and induced him to give up his suspicions for the present."

"Whatever this gibberish may mean," said Gregory, with a clumsy sneer, "it seems you've changed your tactics."

"Fortunately for you. It suits my purpose to be in concert with you. I am not in raptures with the honour, but *you* may thank your stars. You have a dinner party to-night?"

"What the—" Gregory began.

"I'll join it. Miles can be persuaded to accompany me. His accepting *your hospitality after the occurrence might weaken his evidence, if called for*. There! don't turn all colours in that manner. Remember where you are, and the people who are looking at you. My dear Miles," and the speaker wheeled his victim suddenly round, so as to confront the group they had recently left, pitching his voice, as he did so, in a loud key, "our friend Lynch wants us to dine with him to-day. Can you?"

If ever Gregory Lynch had been impressed with the awful majesty of Impudence, he was at that moment.

"Do, Bigfellow!" Billy struck in; "I'm going for one. We'll take sixteen copies of the *Whipping Post* with us, and chaff Gregory till he's blue in the face. He doesn't look a good colour now, but he hasn't half had it yet."

Biglow stammered out an acceptance of the invitation, not very cordially.

"Then it's a bargain," said Don Sancho, briskly.

"Gregory, good-bye for the present. Come Miles, we idle dogs have no right to trespass on these busy bees in honey time. My fellow was to have been here with the cart five minutes ago. Oh, there he is. Hi! What time, Gregory? Six?"

Gregory nodded helplessly from the remote realms of dream-land into which the events of the last few minutes had whirled him.

A handsome dog-cart drew up to the nearest kerb stone in charge of a faultless tiger of the latest metropolitan pattern. Saumarez waving an airy adieu to the mercantile group hurried Biglow (as much astonished as any one) to a seat in the vehicle; leapt on to the box, touched the horse (a gigantic grey) with the whip; and tooled down the High-street at a spanking rate, to the wonder and admiration of Longport generally.

"Who's that fellow, Gregory?" asked the merchant.

"I—I don't know—that is, he's a young man of a very good Mexican family I believe—a friend of Merri- pebbles, the stock-broker."

If the prevailing ambition of Don Sancho de Saumarez were really to take people off their guard, he may be considered on this occasion to have killed several birds by one very decisive stone.

We will not follow Gregory Lynch through the labyrinth of new perplexities that beset him. Let it suffice, that he felt more prostrate than ever before the influence of his mysterious persecutor. The cause of this was a maddening reflection that if the alleged proof of his early guilt, in the possession of the latter were genuine (which he had vainly tried to doubt) the facts of his conduct on the memorable occasion of the water party, would form a damning auxiliary in their establishment before a court of justice. On the whole, he was relieved by the discovery that the Mexican had some apparent motive for conciliating him.

Six o'clock arrived, and with it, at the customary intervals, the dinner guests of Huskisson Lodge. Billy was

among the first, with rather more white neck-tie than was necessary, but resplendent of jewellery, and with the general bearing of two-and-twenty. Our old acquaintance, Mr. Tofts, was of the invited. It was his first admission to the mysteries of the Gregorian table—consequently, a day to be marked with a white stone in the merchant-prince-let's calendar. Tofts was a very fair specimen of Young Longport—where, as in other social latitudes, the rising generation is happily an improvement on its fore-runner.

Old Longport cared for making money exclusively. Longport the younger inherits all his father's taste for that agreeable pursuit, and is quite as clever at it. But he has dawning perceptions of a distinction between means and ends, denied to his predecessor. He worships the family idol—money—with equal, but more enlightened devotion. He is not content with secret homage to the shrine—he accepts the Deity's blessings, and enjoys them openly. Old Longport was a sordid anchorite, given to fasting and castigation. Young Longport is a jovial priest, in purple and fine linen, with his Gothic abbey amid rich pastures, with a goodly refectory, and costly illuminated missals. Mr. Tofts, while emancipating himself “by his own unaided exertions,” as the pleasant fiction has it (I should like to see the phenomenon who really succeeded in life by such means), with surprising rapidity from a very obscure business position, had also made praiseworthy efforts to qualify himself for an influential station that seemed so readily within his grasp. He had read a good deal (rather on the “cramming system, it is true), and never omitted the opportunity of a week's holiday to dash over as many thousand miles of Continental Railway as might be practicable. He had more than a smattering of the principal modern languages, and could pass respectable muster in any general conversation on the arts and literature. Altogether—bating a little supercilious pomposity—Mr. Tofts was a very presentable sort of person. No truer index to his growing importance in the public esteem

could be given then his recognition by Gregory Lynch as an intimate.

The remaining guests, our old acquaintances excepted, were wealthy nonentities—shrewd, clever fellows enough, in their own sphere, but mere ciphers out of it. Biglow and Don Sancho were the last to arrive. The former was a little bit flushed—(they had been fêting the printers in honour of number one, to the utter subversion of all discipline)—but a florid waistcoat, such as could not have bloomed on this cold side of the Atlantic, served to tone down the tints of his countenance. His companion was in faultless dinner costume, and in the highest imaginable spirits.

Don Sancho was the life and soul of the evening. The churlish mistrust invariably evinced by Englishmen of the wealthy classes towards a stranger—especially one who lays himself out to be entertaining—was soon overcome in the assembly by his easy manners, inexhaustible flow of conversation, and, above all, by his chameleon powers of adapting himself to surrounding circumstances. He talked Exchange, stock and scrip, to the merchants, with surprising mastery of his subject. He explained fluctuations of money markets in brief historical essays, and picturesque glances at existing states of society. If a proposed foreign railway or mining company were alluded to, he had either travelled over the country, and could illustrate its resources from his own experience—(generally in the form of exciting adventure, often telling humorously against himself)—or he could impart information on the subject, derived from other sources, that invariably proved of a nature most agreeable to his interlocutors. He entered warmly into all their dry, utilitarian topics, to which he gave an artistic and almost poetic colouring that surprised and flattered his hearers. He was moreover patient of interruption and contradiction; and possessed the subtle art of feigning to receive enlightenment, while in reality dispensing it.

The merchants listened with almost childish attention to

the accomplished traveller and *viveur*, to whom so many unknown worlds, as well as their own narrow one, seemed familiar. He, in reality, monopolised the conversation without appearing to do so. He was prompt to discover the hobby of each *convive*, and which he took care to trot out gently now and then—never failing to give the animal an encouraging pat on the shoulder. He put words into the mouth of the speechless, and helped to deliver the diffident. To Mr. Tofts he was especially attentive, and he had his reward. His encouragement of that gentleman was the means of affording him (Don Sancho) an opportunity of establishing himself in the estimation of his hearers in a less equivocal position than he had previously occupied.

Mr. Tofts had been to London recently, and discoursed of theatres. Mr. Tofts knew French tolerably well, so he preferred discoursing of the St. James's. He even went so far (incited by Don Sancho) as to attempt an imitation of a celebrated Parisian comedian, at that time delighting the Londoners, in a tolerably sparkling *vaudeville*.

Toft's imitation was pronounced faultless by the merchants who were not judges, and by the stranger who was one.

"But you must pardon me for saying," said the latter, "not that it is of the slightest consequence—that the last passage was incorrectly given—so much in fact as to destroy the writer's meaning.

"I think not," answered Tofts, modestly. "I have the book at home. I read it only last week."

"Then," retorted the Mexican, with a chuckle, "you have possibly the advantage over me, *for I only wrote it last year.*"

The amusing stranger was evidently believed to be joking. He, as evidently, enjoyed the impression.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Tofts, with good-humoured incredulity. "Have I the honour of addressing M. Eugène Delorges?"

"My name is Sancho Eugène Delorges Morcartz de

Saumarez," answered the other. "I am descended by my mother's side from a noble French family and a very ancient Irish one. Only, in my capacity of French *vaudevilliste*, I do not think proper to display my polyglot nomenclature in its integrity."

A brief explanation convinced the assembly that the speaker was in reality a French *littérateur* of some honourable standing.

"I see the name of a *Vicomte Eugène Delorges* at the head of several French Joint Stock Companies," observed an old speculator. "Any relation?"

"I am the person," said the Don quietly.

This created an immense sensation—not, however, wholly favourable at first. It was rapidly cleared up.

"I think," said the object of interest, in a tone of relishing jocularly, "I can see at the corner of my friend Toft's mouth an incipient sneer intended for my Vicomteship. I hope it will not be necessary for me to explain that 'Vicomte' in France means the son of a Count. My father is the Conde Balthazar Lope de Saumarez in the old Castilian nobility. I fell in love with an actress once, who persuaded me to take a Parisian theatre. I did so in the title I have since borne, and by which I am not unfavourably known in Paris. It is supposed to have some influence in a prospectus. There is not the least disguise as to the nature of my claim to it."

After this, the hero's reputation was fully established—more especially when it became known, on the assertion of several grave authorities present, that certain of the speculations of which the Vicomte Eugène was a director, were in a thriving condition. It transpired further, that the versatile stranger had (under another name) written two or three successful novels in English. Wary capitalists, who had hitherto held aloof from the wiles of his conversation, now took wine with him approvingly.

Gregory Lynch experienced a wonderful feeling of relief, without being able to account for it, at the discovery that

his former persecutor was a man of apparent respectability and position.

The night wore away and the guests began to depart. Don Sancho received and accepted numerous invitations to envied mansions. As the last knot was dispersing, he said to the host, in his airiest tones—

"Gregory, old boy; I think I'll sleep here to-night. You and I have business to talk over. Tell them to make me up a bed somewhere."

Gregory gave the required instructions with the best grace imaginable.

Biglow Miles and Billy walked to Longport together. The former had been silent throughout the evening from combined causes. Billy with his *facétie* had been thrown in the shade by the voluble stranger. Billy didn't like it.

"I say, Long," he asked pettishly, when they were in the open air; "who is that gassy chap, Saumarez?"

"Why, I thought he was a friend of yours?"

"Never saw him till the other night. He came with an introduction about some share business. It was after office hours, and he apologised for following me to my rooms. There were a lot of us there, very jolly—and he seemed very jolly, so we asked him to stop, and he made himself at home like winking. But don't *you* know all about him?"

"I only knew he was a devilish good actor about four years ago in New York."

"Actor, eh! that was his game, was it? What line?"

"Everything," was the complacent reply. "There's a late house open. Let's go in and paint."

And so the two friends went into the late house, and painted.

Perhaps ere they had quite concluded the operation, the subject of their late discourse was bringing to a close an amicable conversation with his hospitable entertainer in that very room where we have already seen them *tête-à-tête* under more hostile circumstances.

"Well," said Don Sancho de Saumarez, "this is better than cutting each other's throats, isn't it?"

"Yah! I see your move plain enough now, at all events," Mr. Lynch replied, in an amiable growl; "there's four thousand a-year to be won."

"My dear Lynch, you mercantile people think of nothing but money. The money, though very good in its way, is nothing to the accompanying treasure. You'll write the letter?"

"Write it yourself—I'll sign it."

"Copy it will be better. And now, show me my room."

"How about the devotion to your dear young friend?" asked Lynch, with a surly grin.

"My dear Lynch, you ought to be a sufficient judge of character to have perceived that if any man happen to stand in my way, I am not the likely person to move. How very fortunate for you that I am no longer riding in your direction. Here are the candles."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH MR. GREGORY LYNCH DOES A VERY
FOOLISH THING FOR HIS TIME OF LIFE.

DON Sancho Eugène Delorges Moriarty de Saumarez—or, as he in his modesty chose to be styled—Mr. Saumarez, remained in Longport for the space of several weeks, and did there achieve much profit and popularity. As the honoured guest of Gregory Lynch, he was, in virtue of that position, provided with a passport to every door that was particularly well worth knocking at. His social qualities made him a favourite wherever he went. As nothing could be discovered to his prejudice—on the contrary, as upon close and severe investigation he was proved to be really the man he represented himself, namely, the clever author and speculator whom the world knew favourably under the various names, his claims to which he so good humouredly explained on all requisite occasions—Longport felt rather flattered by his countenance than otherwise. Moreover, unlike most amusing people, he appeared in no want of money. Nay, he set his admirers perfectly at their ease on that very ticklish score, by showing a great aptitude for making it. As a recognised amateur on 'Change—a sort of honorary member—he struck “in” with a few lucky speculations, displaying the greatest sagacity in his manner of “staking,” and coming

off on all occasions a winner. A self-feeding lion was decidedly a novelty, and one to be encouraged.

Mr. Saumarez, however, was too good a judge to outlive a reputation. In the height of his popularity—which coincided with the depth of winter—he declared himself “bored” with a northern climate—and the monotonous excitements of a mercantile community. He was off to Genoa one fine morning, carrying with him the regrets of a hundred desolate circles, and some very good names to add to his prospectuses. He carried something else with him which will be mentioned hereafter.

Mr. Saumarez decidedly left his mark behind him. One achievement of his alone would be sufficient to immortalise him in the annals of Longport. He provided Mr. Gregory Lynch with a wife.

The fact was not so generally known as from the magnitude of its importance it deserved to be. Even the favoured Gregory himself never fully recognised the peculiar influence to which he owed his enviable happiness. Neither did the bride (of whom anon). Nevertheless, but for the diplomacy of Mr. Saumarez, the tremendously interesting event would never have come off.

It happened in this wise:—

One morning, after a brilliant *soirée*, at which Mr. Saumarez had been the central lion, reflecting honour upon Mr. Gregory Lynch as his keeper—(Gregory had grown almost fond of his former bugbear, whom he looked upon as a man who had possessed the power to drive a hard bargain with him, but who had been so good as to let him off cheap and not press for payment)—the merchant and his now formally established guest were at breakfast. The latter inquired, in a pleasant argumentative tone,—

“Lynch, why the devil don’t you get married?”

“Married! Good heavens! I never thought of such a thing.”

“More fool you.”

“Why?”

“Why! Because you can never achieve the position

you aspire to unless you do. You have no home. Inviting people here is worse than taking them to an hotel—because they are worse served. . . You have no connections—not even a family to show. You keep your children in the back-ground as if you were ashamed of them.”

“They are very young.”

“Just so; but unless you have somebody to bring them forward, what are you to do with them when they grow up? The female head of your family appears to be a girl whom you do not particularly care about.”

Gregory looked as if he didn't.

“At present you can only look upon them—I mean your children—in the light of poor relations—mere drags upon you, to be provided for some day. Now, if you made an alliance with one of the great mercantile houses (you merchant princes are like other princes; your game is to identify yourselves with the imperial families), all these young folks would become desirable investments—a source of profit and honour to the parent stock. My dear fellow, I haven't lived among the petty German courts for nothing.”

“Well, really, I may have thought of such a thing; but considerations of my time of life—”

“My dear fellow, you are not fifty—and since I have seen fit to relieve your mind from some little oppressive matters, you positively look ten years younger. You are really not an ill-looking man.”

Gregory Lynch pulled up his shirt collar, and squinted at the chimney-glass.

“What would you advise me to do?”

“Marry Miss Cragstone.”

“Miss Cragstone?”

Gregory fell back in his arm-chair, apparently overwhelmed by a too daring proposition.

Mr. Saumarez continued—

“Why not? She's in love with you. Don't laugh: of course I don't mean that—the idea of her being in love with anybody is rather too absurd. But I know this—

I've had a great deal of conversation with her lately, and I am convinced that if you choose to throw the handkerchief to her, stiff as she looks, she'll bend her back to pick it up."

Gregory got up and paced the room backwards and forwards—rubbing his forehead the while. Here was a matter to be thought of.

The great mercantile firm of Cragstone Brothers was to that of Gregory Lynch and Co. much as the houses of Guelph, Hapsburgh, and Romanoff respectively may be considered to the family of Cobourg. Where Gregory Lynch commanded hundreds, the Brothers Cragstone played with thousands. Where Gregory Lynch owned streets, the Brothers Cragstone built towns. They had steamers to his fishing smacks: fleets to his squadrons. Hats that were only touched to Gregory Lynch, flew off in the mud before the Brothers Cragstone.

Amongst their other valuable possessions the Brothers Cragstone owned a sister—a mature spinster of six and thirty, who, to do her justice, looked considerably younger. The Sister Cragstone was remarkably handsome—as far as concerned the moulding of her flesh, the texture and quantity of her hair, and the colour of her skin; but intolerably repulsive-looking, if an unmistakeable expression of arrogance, selfishness, and supercilious conceit be taken into account. An immense opinion of her own importance to the world, both from her intrinsic merits, and by reflection as a member of the great house of Cragstone, had led her to devote the energies of her thirty-six years exclusively to the laudable duty of taking care of herself; in which task of devotion—the lady not being troubled with any of those weak-minded considerations for other people, which occasionally, in some of us, distract the attention—her vigilance had never relaxed a moment. She was amply repaid for her trouble by the preservation of a smooth skin and an erect carriage, at a time of life when the faces of silly sentimental people are usually a little furrowed and their backs slightly bowed.

Suitors had sought Miss Cragstone's hand, of course, and knights on their bended knee, with vows that no maiden heart, &c., &c. But Miss Cragstone was Miss Cragstone still. The awe-struck people in the social regions below whispered that the lady was hard to please. But this was only true in one sense. Miss Cragstone was, perhaps, not so hard to be pleased, as she found it hard to please the most desirable sort of admirers, Miss Cragstone's style of fascination being rather too much in the "queenly," style as it is sometimes styled, but as it really means, in the excessively disagreeable line. She had cultivated the very distinguished faculty of contempt—with a view to inspiring the world with a due sense of her own exalted position above it—so successfully, that the world, at all events the eligible male portion of it, was afraid to approach her. She had persevered for years in insulting, "cutting," patronising, sneering, and turning her handsome nose up at the world in the most consistent manner, and yet that perverse male portion alluded to, instead of falling at her imperial feet like dutiful subjects, persisted in running away like slaves frightened of the whip. So Miss Cragstone at six and thirty was Miss Cragstone still.

It must not be supposed, however, that Miss Cragstone was a desponding spinster. Quite the contrary. Her opinion of her own value was unabated. She considered that any one she might condescend to marry—in the unaccountably delayed event of the right man presenting himself—would be as highly favoured as ever. Still peculiar reasons existed why Miss Cragstone should come down a little in the matrimonial terms should occasion offer. The Brothers Cragstone, whom she had long lorded it over with the rest of their contemptible species, were now married men with growing families. Somehow or other, Miss Cragstone's power and sway over their respective mansions was not what it used to be. Certain conspirators, in the shape of wives, may have had some influence in this altered state of affairs. At any rate, Miss Cragstone's queenly edicts began to be met with something like open rebellion

—even to threats of despotism. There was no hint as yet of reducing the supplies—let the Brothers Cragstone beware how they attempt anything of the kind! Carriages, dresses, and retinue were hers at command, as formerly, and the royal privilege of inspiring terror whenever she made her appearance, was still hers unimpaired. But she felt that her empire was divided, and she longed for a kingdom of her own, over which to reign in undisputed majesty.

So that when the diplomatic ambassador from the Court of Lynch, His Excellency Don Sancho, &c., Saumarez (at first acting without instructions from his Court), opened the delicate mission with which he had been charged—by himself, Her Majesty, Sybil the First, Queen of all the Cragstones, was quite ready to listen to his negotiations. Gregory Lynch was past the heyday of youth, it is true; but that promised submission to the prerogative. He was a little vulgar:—he would be the more awed by refinement and superiority. He was of low origin: well! well! the founder of the House of Cragstone, himself had forged his own sceptre. Finally, Gregory Lynch was comfortably rich—and as that vexatious eligible man seemed still detained somewhere or another, and would not come—why the proposed alliance was a matter for consideration.

We will not pry into the hallowed secrets of diplomacy, to ascertain by what delicate means the wily ambassador brought his mission to a successful close. We will not divulge the imperceptible course of insinuations by which the Longport Beatrice was first led to look upon her unconscious Benedick in the light of a pining Cymon, softened and humanized by the influence of an Iphigenia he feared to approach. We will respect the veil that hangs over the numerous subtle devices employed to bring the eventually stricken Gregory (to descend for once to non-diplomatic language) “up to the scratch,” suffice it that, in the month of January, the exciting news spread through the length and breadth of Longport, that His

Mercantile Highness, Prince Gregory, was about to marry into the Commercial-Royal Family of Cragstone. The preliminaries of the alliance being duly settled, His Excellency Don Sancho de Saumarez went on his Genoese way rejoicing—with what reason may, in the fulness of time, transpire.

The Brothers Cragstone came down very handsomely in the matter of dowry, so much so in fact, and with such barely decent alacrity, as almost to lead to a belief that they were only too glad to get rid of their splendid sisterly encumbrance at any price. This implied insult, however, to his bride elect, was one that Gregory could afford to pocket. He was thoroughly satisfied with the idea of completing the furniture of his magnificent house with a magnificent wife—who moreover paid a considerable portion of her own expenses in advance.

Miss Cragstone visited Huskisson Lodge previous to her marriage, with a view to appraising the premises, stock, and fixtures, before finally concluding the bargain which should make her their possessor. The decision was favourable. The live stock—I beg their pardon, the children—she looked upon as an encumbrance to the estate—but the counterbalancing advantages decided her on putting up with them as a temporary inconvenience, to be disposed of on some future occasion. Miss Wareing she regarded as a trifling blemish on the fair prospect—so easy of removal at any time as to be unworthy of consideration.

The wedding was, of course, very splendid. The elder Brother Cragstone, always celebrated for his liberal principles, outdid himself in the gushing *abandon* of generosity with which he gave his sister away at church. The happy pair departed, per North-Western Railway, for London, *en route* for the North of Italy. The event was chronicled in the Longport serious papers in the following terms :—

“**MARRIED.**—On Saturday, the 10th inst., at St. Ann’s arch, Gregory Lynch, Esq., of Huskisson Lodge, near Long-

port, to Sybil Anne, only daughter of the late Jehosaphat Cragstone, Esq., of this town, and of Freestone Park, Flintshire."

The comic journal of Longport, *i.e.*, the *Whipping Post* (which had seriously astonished the natives by its preternatural longevity) briefly alluded to the occurrence as follows :—

"**MATRIMONIAL.**—We understand from the public prints that the Honourable Member for Tape Street has entered the holy state of matrimony. We trust that he had previously taken the precaution of obtaining a divorce—from his opinions, to which he was so notoriously wedded."

It is possible that the talented and precocious young editor of the publication just quoted regretted being restrained by the canons of good taste from expressing himself more strongly on the subject.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH MR. MARSTON LYNCH DOES A VERY
FOOLISH THING FOR HIS TIME OF LIFE.

WHATEVER may have been the amount of bliss enjoyed by Mr. Gregory Lynch and his gracious bride during the earliest stage of their wedded career, there was one person, at all events, to whom their honeymoon brought days of unclouded happiness. This was Lucy Wareing.

I have already attempted to display the little lady to you as a delicate, sensitive creature, to whose nature kindness and happiness were as indispensable as light and warmth to the flower. (We laugh at those jolly trite old similes when we are not in want of them, but are very happy to fall back upon them on an emergency notwithstanding.) She was happy now to be left alone in the big house, and grateful to those who had been so kind as to leave her there. I have said alone, for her only companions were little children (whom, by the way, as they will take no very active part in my history, I have not thought necessary to particularise), and uncongenial domestics. But the tiny children loved her for her care of them; and the strong, independent servants pitied her for her uncomplaining loneliness. She had nothing to fear—and what a novel treat that was! There was no terrible latchkey to the door to send her heart into her mouth with its relentless heavy sounds. There were no heavy footsteps—as of

seven-leaugued boots—to make her count the stairs as they ascended late at night, and make her feel an ever-recurring wonder that they should stop at the landing beneath her, instead of mounting upwards until they trampled her to destruction. The haughty lady who had visited her two or three times—frightening her out of her wits on each occasion—had been so good as to go abroad for six weeks. What a good haughty lady! Six weeks! It was an eternity. And the little inconsistent body frisked merrily about the house with no more foresight, reader, than you and I display when we enjoy good dinners and invest money in the funds, with the full knowledge that in fifty years, at the outside, the worms will be enjoying and investing in us. It should be mentioned, in extenuation of the young lady's blind enjoyment of present good, that, though brought up in Longport, the advantages of a business education had been denied to her, and she knew no better than to apply practically the maxim of a somewhat obsolete guide, with whose teachings she had some acquaintance, and who has left his opinion on record, that "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

I am afraid though, when I come to look the truth fully in the face, it will have to be admitted that Miss Wareing's happiness during this pleasant period, was not entirely attributable to the negative causes I have mentioned. I am not sure whether at the time I speak of, those Paving and Lighting People, upon whose conduct Mr. Prebble, the printer, entertains such very strong opinions one way or another, had or had not opened a new street in the suburbs of Longport, rendering it a short cut from Ash Grove to the centre of the town, by passing Huskisson Lodge. I think something of the kind must have occurred; otherwise it would be an inexplicable circumstance that, from the first day of Gregory Lynch's departure, a young gentleman whose way to the haunts of business had previously lain by a route at least three quarters of a mile distant, began to pass the house regularly every morning.

The young gentleman was rather well-looking, and de-

cidedly well-grown. Though he could not be more than twenty years of age, he had displayed a highly successful moustache of respectable dimensions, though I fear, if the truth could be ascertained, not so black as it was painted. He moreover had the appearance of having bloomed into a splendid freshness of attire—with the violets and crocuses.

There was nothing remarkable in the fact that Miss Wareing should have noticed this young gentleman on his first appearance—inasmuch as she passed the greater part of her mornings working like a bee, and singing like a bird (the latter only when the weather was fine, and Mr. Gregory Lynch absent) at her little top window, which looked on the public road. There was nothing out of the way in the young gentleman's waving his hat to her with gracious familiarity, or in returning his salute with a bright smile and many noddings of her golden curls. It was perfectly within the range of ordinary circumstances that these proceedings should be repeated on the following morning. But I confess it looks a little like design on the part of somebody, that, on the third morning, the young gentleman, ere he had reached the house by two or three hundred yards, should, on suddenly turning a corner meet Miss Wareing in the act of taking her two youngest charges out for a walk. But it should be remembered that the winter had been so severe and long, and the spring had set in with such unvented loveliness, that it was impossible to stay in doors! It is moreover well known that young people cannot possibly have too much fresh air.

Miss Wareing advanced towards the young gentleman—without betraying the slightest confusion at the encounter (she knew she had come out purposely to seek it, and was not clever at pretences) beyond a rosy blush that covered her bright face all over—and extended her hand to him.

He took it, and held it, rather as if he liked it than otherwise.

“Well, Marston.”

"Well, Lucy."

"I thought I should meet you."

"And you came on purpose?"

"Yes, indeed—" the large, honest, blue eyes completed the sentence as plainly as eyes could speak, with—"what else should I be here for?"

"And so I did," said Marston, with a laugh; "how capitally candid we both are, and what a deal of trouble it saves! Dear little Lucy, I thought I should never see you again."

"I didn't."

"No?"

"No. Everything is so pleasant just now with me. The weather is so lovely; the house is so—so quiet; I am so well. I—I don't know why, but I thought I should see you."

"Does seeing me complete the happiness, then, Lucy?"

"Yes."

Oh! that terrible fascination of innocent candour! What a power it exercises! If those designing young ladies whom I hear of as existing in the world (but whom I have always considered as fabulous creations) could only imitate it, what much greater damage would they achieve than by their affectations of maidenly reserve and shyness! But I suppose it must be inimitable, or they would surely have a try of it.

Marston was fairly disconcerted by the looks of undisguised admiration with which this little maiden regarded him, and by the evident happiness in his society, which she never dreamt of concealing.

He took her hand again, and held it in his own a little longer than before. She let it lie there in perfect security.

"Why, Lucy, what a little woman you have grown!"

"A very little woman!" said Lucy, with a smile that proved her a very pretty little woman, at all events.

"Are you in a hurry to get home?"

"Oh no! There is nobody at home now to—to find

fault with me; and the children have only just come out. I can walk till they are tired—if I may walk with you.”

“Should you like to walk with me, Lucy?”

“Very much indeed, if you will let me.”

And the young lady accepted the arm that was offered her, with a merry laugh, and skipped along like a fawn by the owner’s side.

Marston led one of the children by his disengaged hand—Lucy by the other. In this order they walked towards the town, Miss Wareing manifesting a decided inclination to burst into song by the way, wholly regardless of the mightily respectable tract of country they were traversing.

“And so you are really happy, Lucy?”

“I am very happy indeed—to-day.”

And Miss Wareing, in her happiness, picked an early spring flower that was obtruding through the railings of a most respectable garden, thereby displaying a lamentable ignorance of the rights of property.

“And yet Saumarez told me you were treated with more harshness than ever.”

A slight cloud darkened Lucy’s sunny face, as she replied—

“I am sure he was very wrong. I wish people would not take so much trouble about me—that is, I don’t mean all people. All I want is to be let alone—no, I don’t mean that—I don’t exactly know what I do mean. But I have been left to myself a good deal lately; and I have been very happy. It is not fair to blame papa—I mean Mr. Lynch—for not caring much about me, and finding me in the way, as I dare say I am. But he’s gone to Italy, Italy, Italy—” Miss Wareing’s words were beginning to set themselves to joyous music—“and so—Look at that dear funny old lady in the large bonnet.”

Miss Wareing burst into a silvery laugh at the sight of an unconscious elderly female, ornamented as she had described, calmly walking on the other side of the way.

The exuberance of spirits was contagious. Marston felt that she could scarcely contain herself for the happiness

she derived from his presence—a happiness he could not help reflecting. What a terrible enslaver is that discovery that we can minister to the happiness of another being!

We will not follow these young people any further in their walk—which was of very brief duration, for on an admission from Marston that he had business to attend to (an admission he immediately repented having made) Lucy would on no account hear of her delaying him a moment longer. They parted, with a mutual promise to meet on the following day. Lucy, with a beaming countenance, stood watching the departing form of her late companion, as long as he was in sight. Whenever he looked back, as he did many times, she waved her hand joyously. When he had wholly disappeared, she gazed for several seconds at the corner of the distant street that had concealed him from her view. Then she turned briskly round to attend to her young charges. The smallest of those two individuals looked a little fatigued. She whipped him up in her arms, covered him with kisses, dispelled the last trace of displeasure on his countenance, by a nursery pleasantry of some kind, and incited his maturer companion to a brisk trot homeward. The grim household gods of Huskisson Lodge were startled throughout the day by such echoing melodies as they had never before listened to.

Marston Lynch and Lucy Wareing met and walked together on the following day, and on many following days, under similar circumstances. Each day Lucy looked happier, healthier, and more beautiful. Was Marston in love with Lucy? He did not know. He frequently asked himself the question, but always schemed so to answer himself contemptuously in the negative. And yet, why was he so fond of seeking her society—always taking pains to set off his person and conversation to the best advantage for the occasion? The answer to this was obvious. The rule of the girl's life was oppression and isolation; kindness and sympathy were its exceptions. He had saved her life, and she was, of course, grateful to him. He was kinder to her than anybody else was; and it must be admitted

(without the slightest vanity, of course,) that his intellectual attainments were vastly superior to anything she was likely to be brought in contact with. It was natural that she should take a pleasure in his society. And as the poor child had such few pleasures, it would be downright barbarity to deny her this one.

Oh, Marston Lynch, my young friend! Believe me this kind of sophistry is dangerous—very dangerous indeed. Especially for a not very strong young gentleman, just commencing to hobble through life with no better crutch than Literature!

Was Lucy in love with Marston? She never thought of asking herself the question at all. I fear this lady was not at all of a reflective or calculating disposition, but rather of the emotional order. The weather was beautiful; and Marston was handsome, and good, and kind, and clever; and the walks were lovely. Miss Wareing enjoyed the happy time with all her soul, like—I am afraid I must fall back upon my old friends the flowers and the sun for a simile.

At length a new element of joy was added to the delightful walks—one of extended freedom. Before the departure of the newly-married couple it had been arranged that the olive branches of the Huskisson Lodge nursery grounds should be transplanted for a short time to the domain of one of the Brothers Cragstone—an arrangement originating with the family of the latter, as a graceful attention to their new relation. Accordingly, towards the third quarter of the honeymoon (I fear Gregory Lynch, roaming from flower to flower with his majestic Queen Bee, had left all the honey in the hive at home to be sipped by that little busy-buzzing Lucy), the young folks were fetched away in a carriage by their new aunt—a good-natured, simple-hearted woman, though she did live in a castle, and could never induce people to keep their hats on or their backs straight in her presence. The kind lady would gladly have included Lucy (of whose existence she had never even heard) in her live cargo; but that demure little

person was seized with a sudden and invincible spirit of subordination. She had received no instructions to leave the house, and could on no account think of acting without orders in so important a matter. The good woman, after kissing her, patting her downy cheeks, admiring her golden curls, and loading her with compliments and presents (all of which Miss Wareing accepted without the least surprise, as natural accessories to the happy season her kind fate had provided for her), drove away without her, and Lucy was left literally the mistress of the situation, with her actions unfettered, and the big house all to herself. She scampered up and down the echoing staircases, and frisked in and out of the deserted rooms like an insane mouse.

There were no limits to the walks now—nor was any subterfuge necessary for their being undertaken. Marston came openly to fetch Lucy, who took his arm at the gate in the most unblushing manner. Our hero, by the way, never could be prevailed upon, absolutely, to enter Gregory Lynch's house; the ringing of that gentleman's bell he considered a species of pollution. The female servants—wholly occupied with their own happiness, and that of certain captive butchers, bakers, and policemen—were not spies to be dreaded; and the circumstance that there were neighbours with eyes in their heads was as indifferent to Lucy as the possibility of the moon being inhabited.

They were very delightful walks those—all tenderness, love, and confidence—though without a word of what is usually called love-making being interchanged. The chief topic of conversation was always Marston, his achievements and prospects—a topic, you may believe, he was never weary of discussing, nor his companion of listening to. During those days the editorship of the *Longport Whipping Post* was conducted in the most slovenly manner. The numbers were got up anyhow. Formerly despised and rejected contributors, (amongst them the writer of these pages), were lifted into the seventieth heaven of delirious happiness, by seeing their communications inserted by the basketfull, without excision or modification. The circula-

tion fell off deplorably, and the countenance of Prebble was sorrowful to behold.

And where was the spirited proprietor—the enterprising Biglow—that he suffered such neglect of his interests? I have forgotten—or rather have not had an opportunity to state. But with the approach of winter that speculator had found his favourite post no longer tenable. It was always either damp or clammy with rain, coated with ice like a tall twelfth-cake, or nightcapped with a pyramid of snow. It was impossible to sit down upon it. Moreover, the public house round the corner had changed hands in favour of a degenerate landlord, under whose *régime* the quality of the “Scotch” deteriorated shamefully. One disgustingly wet morning, Biglow paid his bill at the York, according to his daily custom, ordered a fly, and started at last for the Mediterranean, leaving Marston the copyright of the *Whipping Post* (then on the verge of “paying-point),” as a present—with a moderate balance at his banker’s, to wind up or carry on the concern as he might choose. Marston would have adopted the former course—for he was getting rather tired of provincial fame, and burned for a wider field (to which *en passant*, he had been encouraged by several successes in the metropolitan periodicals); but the enthusiastic Prebble, whose faith in the vitality of the paper was unaccountable, offered to take it off our hero’s hands, retaining him as editor at a reduced salary. So the *Whipping Post* lingered on, with Marston Lynch as its presiding spirit.

I have said that Miss Wareing was not of a calculating or far-seeing disposition. Nevertheless, to make use of my tiresome old flowers once more (this shall be the last time, I give you my honour), I believe there are some specimens which close up their leaves and droop instinctively at the approach of bad weather, long before the clouds have shown themselves. The happy time was all but over. A letter had been received announcing that Mr. Lynch and his bride would be home on the following day. The two—lovers shall I call them, or what?—went

out for their last walk. Lucy's face was not half so bright as it had been; the eyelids quivered, and she was quite pale.

Still there was one fine day, and one long walk before her,—and there was Marston by her side, as handsome and as kind as ever. To-morrow was a very long way off, after all.

They had neither of them dared to speak of their approaching separation. Marston talked about himself and his brilliant prospects with unusual volubility—a volubility, in fact, that seemed almost forced. In the midst of a glowing prospectus of some tremendous literary undertaking that was to storm the two hemispheres, Lucy interrupted him, looking him full in the face, and speaking, almost for the first time of herself, said—

“Marston, do you think I am clever?”

“Clever! why upon my word, Lucy, I have never thought of it. You are very good, and very pretty.”

“Yes, I know—at least, I did not mean that, but do you think there is anything I could do to earn money—so as not to be one bit a tax or burden upon—any body that cared for me?”

“Well I really don't know, Lucy.”

“Nor I, but I want to know—I have no idea how much cleverness it requires. There are a great many things I can do—quite well, indeed.”

She said this with an earnestness that made her companion smile.

“Indeed, Lucy, and what are they?”

“Oh, nothing like what you can do, of course. I could never write beautiful poetry and stories,—I could never write anything, for I cannot even speak so as to express what I mean. I can draw, though—?”

“You can draw very prettily, Lucy.”

“Yes—that's all; and I am afraid that isn't enough. But I can play the piano better than any one I know—except Mrs. Rufflestone. I play much better than Maud, or Miss Croeze herself.”

"Well, Lucy?"

"What I want to know is—do not people live by teaching such things—and live very well?"

"Not very well, I am afraid, Lucy. It is a life of drudgery and anxiety at best."

"Then that would never do—it would make me cross and weary, and perhaps ailing. It would spoil my looks—"

"You vain little puss!"

"Indeed I am not. But I should like always to look pleasant, and healthy, and cheering—and to have so much time to improve myself and make me fit——" She stopped and turned slightly red—adding immediately,—
"Tell me, Marston, do you think I could act on the stage?"

"On the stage, Lucy! Good heavens!"

"I have often thought I could. I have been to the theatre two or three times with Mrs. Merripebbles, and I have seen girls who were not a bit cleverer or"—she added with slight hesitation,—
"prettier than myself, very much praised and admired for what I think I could do better. Do not they earn a great deal of money—and live very comfortably?"

"Far from it, Lucy. The majority of them do not earn enough to maintain them in respectability—a state which they have frequently too many temptations to quit. In order to attain anything like competence and position, you would have to go through many years of poverty, toil, and insult—through many scenes of misery and vice."

"Vice?" Lucy shuddered.

"Yes; you would be brought into contact with people whose conduct and principles would first shock, and ultimately deaden your pure and sensitive nature. At best, you would have such a struggle to maintain your own interests that you would become calculating and selfish."

"Enough, Marston—I see it would never do. Never."

"But what are you thinking of, Lucy?" Marston inquired with forced gaiety. "Surely you do not propose

to leave your step-father's roof, and commence life on your own account?"

"My own account! Oh! No—I mean when I think of such a thing it would be impossible. But go on talking about yourself, Marston."

Marston could no longer talk about himself. That self seemed no longer to have an independent existence. He mused over the girl's artless questions. He knew that they referred to a dim vision of passing her life with him—supposing it could be proved she could do so without being a burden to him—as well as if she had put her wild dreams (as she considered them) into words. He had vainly endeavoured to repress the feeling that she was as necessary to his existence as he to hers. He thought of the coming morrow, and foresaw his loneliness. But though a bold swimmer and a fearless satirist, Marston Lynch, in some matters, was "a coward, and a most devout coward—religious in't." Young as he was, he knew himself and his own helplessness of character. He shuddered at the terrible responsibility of another being's welfare.

But here was this graceful, spiritual, little lady hanging lovingly on his arm—and Gregory Lynch would be home to-morrow!

They were at some distance from the house, but walking without any fixed destination.

Marston broke a long silence:—

"Which way shall we walk, Lucy?"

"Whichever way you please."

"Remember, this is the last walk we can take together."

Lucy's eyeballs started; the muscles of her face quivered painfully; and the little gloved hand trembled violently on Marston's arm.

"Let us make the best of our time and make it a very long walk."

"Oh! a very long one."

"Have you no choice of roads?"

"Well, Marston, if you wish me to say, there is one walk I have often thought of asking you to take me."

"And that is——"

"To go and see the river."

"The river! Ah, Lucy, you love the river, then?"

"Yes, Marston."

"Did you always love the river so much?"

"No, Marston, not till——"

A choking sound checked Miss Wareing's utterance. Streams of tears were rolling down her cheeks from her strained blue eyes.

"Not till it was so good as to throw you into my arms, dear Lucy, Marston said tenderly. He was on the point of adding—"arms that you shall never leave, my darling," but his cowardly angel stepped in, and imposed silence.

"Come, then, let us walk to the river."

And towards the river they walked, closer to each other than they had ever walked before.

Though much earlier in the year, it was just such another day as that of the memorable water party. The sky was as blue, the gulls were as busy, and the river looked as sparkling and as lovely.

The young couple stood on the town pier, their eyes, by common consent, directed towards the spot where their perilous adventure had taken place. Then the two pairs of eyes turned round and met. The little gloved hand pressed more heavily on the arm; the little form nestled more tenderly and beseechingly to the beloved side, as if imploring not to be driven away from it.

Marston's cowardly angel showed symptoms of dozing.

A little noisy, angry, steamer was snorting and kicking in the water, impatient to get away from a shore with which it appeared on the worst terms imaginable. The destination of the boat was B——, the suburban bathing place on the other side of the Wynde, towards which our friends had been sailing, as will be remembered, with supper intentions, at the time of the famous accident. The stock of passengers was complete, and the moment

for departure had arrived. Marston put his foot on the plank of communication with the shore, just as a man was about to remove it, and looked round at Lucy.

"Shall we—?" was all he said.

"Oh, yes!" was the eager response; and the two young people, perfectly understanding each other's meaning, went on board the irascible little steamer, which, being immediately released from the detested shore, and having no further cause for complaint, went on its way in the best temper imaginable.

A quarter of an hour's steaming brought them to the scene of their former perils. The two stood gazing at the water with hearts too full for words.

Marston felt obliged to say something, so he said, playfully, "Jump in again, Lucy; I am sadly out of practice with my swimming."

Lucy elung to him with a look of terror.

"Oh! no, no!" she said quickly. "Do not jest upon it. Though I love to think of it—to think how brave and strong you were—yet it frightens me when I think how nearly you were sacrificed in saving my little worthless life."

"I didn't think it worthless, Lucy, you may depend, or I should never have taken so much trouble to preserve it."

Lucy did not appear to heed the remark, but continued, as if to herself—

"Nearly sinking—all but drowned, they said you were—and yet would not let go of me—a senseless dead weight that was dragging you down. While"—She stopped, and changing her musing tone to one of earnestness, said, "Oh, Marston! you ought to love Maud much better than me."

"I am very sorry to hear it, Lucy, for indeed I do not. But may I ask why?"

"Because when I was endangering your life—a helpless encumbrance fettering your movements—Maud was working like a giant or a horse to save you. How I have loved

Maud for that. How I wish I was strong and resolute—and rich, like her.”

“You would not be half so loveable as you are, being weak, and timid, and penniless, my Lucy.”

The steamer reached its destination, and our two young friends landed with the rest of the passengers. The little watering-place was a pretty toy village (they tell me it is quite a large town now), with a beautiful beach, and backed by a pleasant landscape. The day, as I have said, was remarkably fine for the time of year; and the two young people walked about the beach and the fields, not till they were tired—that undesirable consummation was a long way off—but till one of them was hungry. Yes, unromantic as the admission may be, it was getting late in the afternoon, and Marston Lynch most decidedly wanted his dinner.

He proposed that they should *al fresco* in the pleasure-gardens of the little sea-side hotel. Lucy, who would have walked all day without once thinking of such a thing as food, was delighted at the proposition. She would at any time have given up her dinners for a moment's glimpse of Marston; but a dinner with Marston! She had never thought so much of eating in her life before.

Accordingly a dinner they had, and a very nice dinner too—materially as well as by its higher associations. But for the near and rapid approach of that dreadful cloud, TO-MORROW, Lucy's happiness would have been perfect.

After dinner they had more country walks, and then tea at the hotel. The happy time was all but over. The sun began to set on the last day of their freedom. There was now no blinking the fact, that those two dismal homes must be returned to. They resolved to prolong their day's enjoyment to the last possible moment, and only to return to Longport by the last steamer, which left a little after dark.

I remember when I resided at Longport (or rather when I was in a place of business there; for, like the heroine of the touching Westminster legend, I had my dwelling “on

the other side of the water)", and used to waste an immense quantity of my employer's time and paper in writing contributions to the *Longport Whipping Post*, some of which Mr. Lynch (whom I looked up to with considerable awe) was so good as to insert; there was one subject which I made peculiarly my own, and on my treatment of which the talented young editor was pleased to compliment me in the most handsome manner. This subject was the river steamers—upon which, I no doubt, wrote with considerable feeling—as they were a source of unending nuisance to me. There were opposition companies, whose amiable object seemed to be, not so much to enrich themselves as to ruin their opponents. From threepenny fares they got down to twopenny; from twopenny to penny ones. With this unreasonable cheapness came a more than corresponding amount of nastiness. The boats were bad, the machinery worse; the crews ill-paid, and consequently incompetent. The result was scrapes and accidents innumerable. I was constantly getting in trouble at the office through the want of punctuality in the boats; and as I was by no means remarkable for that valuable business quality myself, I considered their assistance superfluous. It is true that the medal had its reverse. If I happened to be too late through my own laziness, I could always throw the blame on the broad shoulders of the steamboat companies.

The boat that was bearing Lucy Wareing and Marston Lynch towards Longport made a sudden stoppage when about half way on her journey. The shattered old machinery had become seriously affected in some vital part, and could make no further exertions. The boat drifted with the tide down nearly to the mouth of the river, when it was found necessary to cast anchor on a mud-bank. The passengers had the pleasure of waiting on board for about four hours, till assistance could be procured.

In consequence of this vexatious accident, before Marston Lynch and his fair companion reached the vicinity of Huskisson Lodge it was nearly two o'clock in the

morning, which all right-minded readers will agree with me in pronouncing a very pretty time of night for a young lady to be out of doors with no companion but a young gentleman.

It had come on to rain violently, and no conveyance being obtainable, Lucy's thin garments were soon wet through. Marston hurried her homewards as rapidly as possible. The wind and rain allowed them little time for conversation. They deferred their adieux till the following morning. The married pair were not expected till late in the day; they would have one last opportunity of meeting, however brief, and then—Well, what then?

They turned the corner of a street that brought them full in sight of Huskisson Lodge.

Both started back in horror. There were lights in all the windows. The sound of bustling feet and the movement of heavy packages was heard, also that of voices in angry altercation.

The dreadful truth flashed upon them at once. The master and mistress of the house had returned home, prematurely, during their absence.

What was to be done?

A moment's reflection convinced Marston that there was but one course he could pursue. That was to restore the girl to her guardians and explain honourably the causes of her absence and its protraction. Conquering his repugnance to a meeting with his uncle, and endeavouring to re-assure the half-fainting Lucy by such consolations as he could think of, he approached the house and knocked boldly at the door.

It was opened in a second by Gregory Lynch himself—his countenance distorted with anger and other less obvious emotions.

Lucy's absence had been discovered. The secret of its origin had been wormed out of the servants. Mr. and Mrs. Lynch had commenced their domestic career of a "housewarming" of a most exciting nature on the subject.

"I have brought this young lady home," said Marston quickly, before his uncle had time to speak. "However unacceptable my presence may be, you must listen to my explanation—"

"Mr. Lynch, shut that door," said an imperious voice from the dining room.

Mr. Lynch held the handle, and looked undecided. Marston pursued—

"You shall hear me—and I insist you will not visit on *her* head, an offence for which I alone am to blame—"

"Mr. Lynch, *do* you hear me," said the voice in a louder key.

"My dear—at any rate let us hear——"

The speech was cut short by the appearance in the passage of Mrs. Lynch herself—who burst from the dining room—her face the very incarnation of rage and cruelty.

"I have told you I would not be insulted in my own house, on the first day of my coming to it," she said in a choking voice. "How dare you pollute this place with your presence? Leave the house, you abandoned hussey."

And with the vulgar spite of an infuriated fish-fag, rather than the dignity of an offended matron, the magnificent Sybil, thrust Lucy Wareing rudely through the door. Marston descended a step to save her from falling. The door was immediately slammed in their faces.

I trust the reader will allow that I have got my hero into a very pretty situation.

What was to be done? Marston's horror and indignation at the barbarity he had just witnessed were forgotten in his perplexity as to what provision he should make for his helpless charge.

He was not long deciding.

"Come, Lucy," he said, after a painful silence, as he clasped the sobbing girl comfortingly to his breast, "dry your tears, my darling. This is a sad adventure, but we may both live to bless it. There is something more than chance in this. Providence seems to have designed me to

watch over and protect you. Do not regret the home you have lost—I will make a better one for you that you shall never leave. Lucy, you must be my dear darling little wife.”

She burst from his embrace with a wild cry, and exclaimed frantically—

“No, Marston, no! It must not be—not this way—not forced and driven upon you like this. If it had come at another time, and of your own free will, it would have made me happier than ever living girl deserved to be. No, it shall not be—let me go, Marston—it is cruel to hold me when you know how weak I am—let me go and never, never see me again.”

She struggled violently to get away from him; he detained her with gentle force.

“Lucy, my darling, be calm. I say it shall be, and was meant to be. I already feel humbly thankful for the accident that has previously brought this about. Without it, I confess, my selfish fears—no, not selfish, for they were fears that I should not be able to make you happy.”

“Oh, Marston!”

“Well, they are at an end now, so never mind them. I feel more strong and hopeful at this moment than I ever did before. You have made me feel like a man, Lucy. I have a man’s duties, and a man’s strength before me. They shall all be devoted to making my dear little woman proud and happy.”

She gently placed her arms about his neck, and pressed her streaming face to his heart. She could only sob and exclaim—“It is too much—it is not real!” several times in succession.

“It is not half enough, my Lucy, and it is as real as your love,” said Marston. “I shall always look back to this pouring night as the bright morning of my existence.”

But the pouring night was only bright morning in a figurative sense. Materially speaking, it was a subject for

serious consideration. Where could Lucy be disposed of for the night? Marston thought of his own landladies; but the acerbity of the spinsters Crayners disposition was encouraging for so delicate an occasion. Pshaw! what was Marston thinking of? There was Miss Crooze, to be sure. The thing was settled at once.

It was a good mile and-a-half's walk to Ash Grove—and the rain continued with unabated violence. But never was the brightest moonlight promenade more fraught with bliss to two young lovers. Marston was astonished at his own serenity of mind and approval of the step he had taken. Lucy's heart was too full to speak, except in broken interjections.

But as they neared their destination, she grew calm and thoughtful, and said in a sweet self-possessed voice—

"Marston, before we part for the night, you must promise me one thing faithfully."

"Willingly my darling—and that is——?"

"That if to-morrow——" Lucy checked a convulsive sob, and preserved her composure—though she spoke with embarrassed slowness—"that if to-morrow you should repent of what has occurred to-night, you shall tell me so—"

"And if I should do so, Lucy?"

"I dare not think of it—but, come what will, it must be done—or I should find it out, without you telling me, and you shall be free as if nothing had ever happened."

"It's a very safe promise, Lucy, as I should never have to redeem it."

"Oh! Marston, are you sure?" her voice gave way completely. "Can you be happy with me? Am I good enough? Can I make myself so? I will try so hard. I will make myself so light a weight"—

"That I shall be able to swim through life with you in my arms as easily as through the river. Eh, Lucy?"

"Marston, I have been thinking of that all the way."

"Of what?"

"Of the river. It seems as if I was born to be a

helpless burden to you, to impede your movements, to retard your progress."

"Recollect, Miss Wareing, if you please," said Marston, gaily, "that I am an excellent swimmer, and that it was anxiety on my account caused you to tumble into the water. Here we are at Miss Crooze's."

There was a light in the sitting-room, for Marian was a late reader. Marston rang the bell.

After some delay, and an inquiry from the voice of Miss Crooze as to the nature of her untimely visitors, the door was opened and Marian appeared, candle in hand, in the most unsightly of fireside costumes.

She gazed at the dripping pair with speechless astonishment.

"Miss Crooze,—Marian," said Marston, in a low imploring voice. "This is my dear little wife, who is turned out this bitter night without a home. Give her one for to-night, for our old friendship's sake."

Marian started back angrily. Her dark eyes flashed, and she clutched the frightened girl by the wrist in no very gentle manner. Then, suddenly relenting at the sight of the pitiful little figure that was shrinking from her, lifted Lucy in her strong arms as she would have lifted an infant, kissed her tenderly, and carried her to her warm fire-side, like a careful mother.

About a fortnight afterwards the following paragraph appeared in the Longport journals :—

"**MARRIED.**—On Monday, the 14th inst., Marston Lynch, Esq., of Ash Grove, Longport, to Lucy, only daughter of the late Peregrine Wareing, Esq., of Manchester."

CHAPTER XIX.

SAUMAREZ MADE EASY.

THERE is a little matter pending between me and the reader, which I am aware has been allowed to "stand over" a great deal too long. This is a lucid and unequivocal explanation of Don Sancho de Saumarez. As I am about to leave Longport—taking with me as many members of my little pen and ink family as I can conveniently accommodate—and as I wish to do so respectably, carrying a good name with me to my future sphere of action, it behoves me to consider well what out-standing claims there are against me, that they may be met, if possible.

In a very early chapter, as one or two inveterate readers may remember, I issued a sort of manifesto as to my intentions in the conduct of this narrative. I repudiated any design of exciting interest either by suspended mystery or melodramatic surprise. I declared that my purpose was at once to lay bare my characters to the best of my ability, and let them plead by their own consistent words and actions for the reader's sympathy or aversion. As an author who has not wholly succeeded in carrying out his original intention, I believe I shall not quite stand alone by a million or so of clever people who have gone before me. Still, I have endeavoured to adhere to mine—and cannot better prove my sincerity than by promptly remedying my short-

comings in this respect, when I am conscious of them—which, by the way, reader, you may take as a fine moral example worthy of imitation in most things. You are, moreover, perfectly welcome to it, and are requested not to thank me; as any thing of the kind would make me uncomfortable.

I feel that, with regard to Don Sancho, I have kept up a mystery wholly irreconcilable with my professions. And yet I think I can give myself the paradoxical consolation of having done it very badly. The other day I caught a very true Briton of my acquaintance, whose glory it is to despise everything foreign, making use of a French expression. I taxed him immediately with the disgraceful *légal-patriotism*. He was not a bit abashed. "Yes, my boy," he replied triumphantly, "I *did* speak French for once. I own it. *But I flatter myself I pronounced it so that no Frenchman could have understood what I meant!*" Just so, I flatter myself, that though I have wilfully mystified you as to who and what Don Sancho really was, I have, in spite of myself, shown you occasional glimpses of his character that must have let you into the real state of the case.

The last paragraph is intolerably conceited. How do I know I am able artist enough to make you understand that I have drawn a particular species of quadruped, without writing under it—"This is a horse." I see I had better tell you all I know about Don Sancho de Saumarez immediately.

I will begin by avowing that his title was no more Don and his name no more Sancho, than yours or mine. That is one of the few statements that can be made of him with anything like positive certainty. What his real name and origin may have been is a problem not altogether easy of solution. He had been known, at different times, by a score of titles—to any one of which, on occasion, he could establish a claim—by some ingeniously built theory, the *vraisemblance* of which baffled even those who had listened to, and believed in, a contradictory one on the previous day.

I have admitted, then, to start with, that he was an inveterate liar. He certainly was : and he had carried the art to such perfection that his inventions could rarely be detected from the truth. He was like a well counterfeited coin, that may excite your suspicions, but which rings so well and appears so nearly of the right weight and impression that you are fain to take it, in spite of your instinctive repugnance. Stripped of the many specious coatings of romance, with which, from time to time, he had embellished it, his naked history may be accepted as something closely resembling the following :—

He was the son of an Irish adventurer and a Spanish dancer. Let not my thin-skinned readers on the other side of St. George's Channel take umbrage at the former epithet, nor at what is to follow. Ireland from an early date has been prolific in adventurers—in the most invidious sense of the term—a circumstance no more discreditable to the Irish character than the abundance of pickpockets in London is to the English. The thing is easily explained. Ireland is virtually a conquered country, with a race of Helots. The holders of the land are "gentlemen" (a word for which I confess to an early and deeply-rooted abhorrence). All their descendants, and consequently their hangers-on and imitators, must be gentlemen too. Work is as discreditable to the Irish "man of famfly" as to the Inca of Peru, or the Carolinian planter. But, unfortunately, to illustrate my meaning by a vulgar image, the sow has not always sufficient teats for the litter, and the little pigs must be fed. Hence the tribe of social free-lances and fortune hunters that we have been typified in the O'Triggers and Mulligins of modern literature—types of which every patriotically-minded Irishman must admit, while deploring, the truth.

The father of the young man whose career I am about to sketch was the cadet son of a reckless and impoverished Irish family. Thrown on his own resources at an early age, he commenced life with the *idée fixe* of leaping suddenly into the false position he believed his birthright. In

the pursuit of this aim he wasted talents and energies which, properly applied, must have secured him an honourable position in any community. He was unlucky in his speculations. Heiresses refused to be carried off, and bubble companies would burst with fatal persistency. The rapidity of his moral descent may be conceived. The unscrupulous speculator became the professional gamester—the gamester was shortly recognised as the cheat. Ruined in means and reputation, but still with a dogged belief in his right to live at the expense of others, he found himself reduced, at the middle time of life, to the wretched expedient of marrying a popular dancer of more than questionable reputation—whose earnings he fleeced, and at whose irregularities he winked. The dancer bore a son (whose resemblance to her husband excited some astonishment), subject of the present remarks.

Like Marston Lynch, Sancho de Saumarez (I will adhere to the name for the sake of simplicity) was the heir to considerable talents and accomplishments. But—less fortunate than our hero in this respect—he had not the advantage of receiving them with a favourable moral bias. As I shall have to display him performing many base and discreditable actions, I would have this duly considered in his extenuation. He had been reared in an atmosphere of pretension and dishonesty. He had been taught to consider talents only as a means for taking advantage of the world. The human virtues were only valuable for the interest they would bring in. Temperance was to be encouraged, that the head might be kept cool. Good breeding, and the cultivation of the external elegancies, were good for the obtaining of false credit. Profuseness and hospitality were preliminary steps to fleecing. Education was an investment that would bring in returns in a thousand different ways. “Knowledge is power”—was a maxim to be accepted in a very different sense to that intended by Bacon.

The quick-witted lad learned his iniquitous lesson only too readily. At the age of nineteen he was left to his own

resources. His mother, the dancer—worn out by a life of vice and ill-treatment—had entirely lost the charms which ensured her popularity—and made her a desirable investment to her calculating husband. The latter had thrown her off like an old garment, and attached himself to a more youthful and profitable vocalist—the wife of another man. The wretched woman—never at any time of a strong mind—and having long had all self-respect beaten out of her—died at an early age, a confirmed drunkard—only rescued from starvation by the fruits of her son's first ventures as a *chevalier d'industrie* on his own account. It is a good trait in his character, that to the last he had never abandoned a parent, to whose tenderness he had never been much indebted, and for whose character he could not but feel the utmost contempt.

Let the reader imagine a youth of nineteen, of premature physical development, with a keen relish of life, having travelled half over the world in the company of black-legs and swindlers from his cradle (for the father, while using his wife's earnings as a reserve, had never neglected his own calling as professional gamester)—with a knowledge of almost every European language, and a ready faculty of self-adaptation to any circumstances—moreover, never having had a single moral principle instilled into his nature: imagine, I say, such a personage thrown loose upon London, and consider whether or not he was in a position of danger to himself and society.

His first experiment would seem at a glance to have been of a character to encourage him in an honourable career. He wrote a novel that achieved a brilliant though ephemeral success. This was followed by another, with equally fortunate results. A third succeeded, that was a deplorable failure. It was soon discovered that the two first were, respectively, barefaced thefts from the French and German. This, however, was a matter interesting only to the critics. The public were amused, that was sufficient. In the third adventure it is probable that the writer had rashly trusted to his own resources.

Still, supposing the young Bohemian to have really possessed original talents of a character to ensure him a legitimate position in literature, it is doubtful whether success so obtained would have satisfied him. The thing was too straightforward. His gigantic organ of secretiveness required exercise of a more artful and involved character. The only kind of literary triumph he thoroughly rejoiced in was such as having successfully frustrated another man's idea, having mystified the world by the forging of another man's style, or having borrowed a plot, character, or expression, from an obscure source, and kept detection at bay. The organ of veneration was almost absent from his head; but there were two literary names that he held in something nearly approaching to reverence. These were Chatterton and Daniel De Foe, whom he respected, not as able writers, but as gigantic hoaxers. The literary swindles of Mr. Edgar Poe had not yet reached this country, or a third idol might have graced the shrine.

The young gentleman, in fact, was something like the enthusiastic pickpocket recently examined by Mr. Henry Mayhew, who declared that, "if he had two thousand a-year he wouldn't give up stealing." No honour or profit was, in his estimation, worth having, unless obtained by some ingenious chicanery. It is not to be supposed that such propensities would remain long satisfied with venial tricks upon the reading and publishing world. His name soon got mixed up with graver deceptions, and, at a very early age, he was a marked man in London, with a fly-blown reputation.

Still his youth, talents, and many excellent qualities secured him a very long impunity. He was tolerated even by men of irreproachable lives—fully aware of his moral shortcomings. He was, indeed, an excellent companion, faultlessly good-tempered, and without a grain of malice in his composition.

One day a popular author, more celebrated for his *bonhomie* than for any particular delicacy of taste, said to

"I say, you, whatever you call yourself to-day, I wonder, amongst all your schemes, you have never thought of the dodge of turning honest. You are a devilish pleasant fellow, but we can't recognise you, you are such a thundering rogue. Why don't you drop it, and *become one of us*?"

"I am fond of antitheses," was the well-earned reply.

Another popular author, more celebrated for his immense opinion of his own influence than for the possession of any other quality, publicly announced his intention of taking the young scapegrace in hand, with a view to his immediate reformation. He invited him to dinner, and cruelly monopolised the conversation during and after the feast, by the enunciation of moral principles of the "round hand copy" school. The young man wept tears of contrition, and promised speedy amendment. His self-satisfied mentor boasted prodigiously of the convert his eloquent preaching had secured to morals and society.

The next day the strenuous exertions of his most influential well-wishers had to be employed in order to save the hopeful neophyte from criminal prosecution, on a most discreditable bill transaction.

But there was one active principle in the nature of the man I treat of, even more absorbing than the fondness for plotting and intrigue. It was vanity—of the most insatiable description. This passion may have been the means of saving him the commission of many of the graver offences—to which mere calculation would possibly have led him—as he would at any time forego interest or honour for the sake of a moment's effect. It even led him to perform many meritorious actions; as the desire to appear good—whatever its basis—inevitably must do. He would give his last guinea to a road-side beggar for a moment's reputation as a millionaire!

Still the gratification of the latter passion often went hand in hand with his worst propensities. Alone—without witnesses—he was humane enough to save a drowning fly, or, what requires more self-denial, to assist a prostrate

friend; but he was capable of murdering his brother if he could think of any *coup de théâtre* that would make his execution go off with unusual *éclat*. He was, physically, a great coward; and, as I have indicated, had not a particle of vindictiveness in his composition. Nevertheless, he had fought a duel with imperturbable *sang froid*—nearly killing an adversary for whom, secretly, he had the strongest personal regard.

Some months before the opening of our narrative—finding his great strongholds, London and Paris, a little too hot to hold him—he had emigrated to America, at the head of an operatic speculation. As he was an admirable, clear-headed man of business, he easily made this tell to his profit. From the United States he proceeded to Spanish America—every inch of which ground he had gone over in his youth with his unprincipled parents. Having disbanded his *troupe* in Mexico (not leaving them in the lurch, for he it understood he was incapable of deliberate cruelty or mere avarice, and his earnings on this occasion enabled him to behave munificently to all in his employ), he was proceeding northward to create a sensation in New York, with exaggerated accounts of his newly-acquired wealth (in reality but a few hundreds), and a bran new romance as to his personal history, when he met, by accident, in Vera Cruz, Gregory Lynch's wretched heart-broken accomplice—Donovan. Strange to say, the account given by our ingenious friend, while temporarily rejoicing in the name of Brown, of his relations with this person, was founded on actual truth. They had been really schoolfellows; and the poor, contrite, spiritless wretch, unexpectedly cheered in his last moments by the presence of a man he had known, and not undeservedly loved as a boy—had relieved his aching heart by a confession of his guilt, in the forlorn hope that tardy justice might be done to those he had injured. Saumarez took the most careful notes of the case, and promised the dying man his wishes should be attended to. When he had followed the poor outcast to his grave—not without having

previously surrounded his sick-bed with every comfort that money or kindness could procure—he at once started for New York, with the determination of applying the knowledge he had obtained to his own advantage. He rapidly conceived a plot, the intricacy of which excited all the ardour of his intriguing nature. He had received a hint of the presence of Martin Lynch and his father in New York. His first idea was to associate himself with their interests, and sell his secret to them at the expense of Gregory. He found them starting for England, the father evidently in a dying state. He took a passage in the same ship, and proceeded rapidly to study the character of the pair. He soon discovered that no satisfactory results were to be expected from them. He resolved to keep his own counsel—and make his secret valuable by intimidating Gregory.

During the passage homeward he became sincerely attached to Marston Lynch. He resolved, secretly, that our hero should derive some benefit from the plot he had concocted—provided his own interests were not interfered with.

Don Sancho de Saumarez was very attentive to Mr. Everard Lynch during the passage—equally from a desire to possess himself of every detail of the family history, and from genuine humanity of disposition. His *bonhomie* and knowledge of the world, as has been seen, rapidly endeared him to Marston. Perhaps the daily association with such an ingenuous nature as that of our hero, made Don Sancho de Saumarez a better man during that fortnight than he had ever been before, or ever became afterwards. It is a pity those American liners cross over so rapidly! Who knows but if the voyage had endured a few weeks longer, the unconscious teachings of the younger man would have sunk deeply into the corrupted heart of his worldly companion, and Don Sancho de Saumarez might have landed in England a reformed being. Who knows? I am sure I do not. It were a pity that the marvellous developments of steam navigation should be retarded for the mere reserve of one human soul from vice.

Besides, if Don Sancho de Saumarez had been cured of being a scamp before the opening of our first chapter, what would have become of this delightful history? Obviously, whatever is, including Mr. Pope's philosophy, is right!

And now, whatever it may cost me, I am about to tear off the last scrap of romantic gold lace that made Don Sancho de Saumarez a picturesque personage. Henceforth, he must be utterly commonplace. He put on that Mexican dress in which he was first introduced to the reader, solely because he knew he had to call at a house where there was an evening party. His pretending to feel faint in the lobby was pure humbug. He had never felt better in his life; but he had made up his mind to be invited to spend the evening. The blood mare which made such havoc of the turf and female hearts of Ash Grove on the following morning he had simply hired: he never rode her a second time. The twenty-pound note he gave Mrs. Merripebbles was, at least, ten pounds more than he could comfortably afford. There was not the least necessity for him to disguise his person or to call himself Brown on the occasion of his visit to Gregory Lynch. But he could be nothing if not melodramatic.

It is true that in establishing for himself a reputation for high breeding and munificence in Ash Grove he had an ulterior design. From the first hint of Miss Carlton's fortune, he had smelt out another plot worthy the engagement of his faculties. An heiress of such importance, surrounded by mere *bourgeois*, he thought would become an easy prey. But it was against his principle to win her by easy means. He resolved to marry her one day; but the prize was not worth having unless obtained over surmounted difficulties: if none of sufficient magnitude occurred, he would make them. Hence his desire to attach Marston Lynch to Lucy, at the first hint of Maud's partiality for our hero; hence his willingness to waive his power over Gregory, for the sake of that gentleman's countenance and valuable introduction; hence his furtherance of Gregory's marriage with

a narrow-minded, spiteful woman, who would be sure, by her ill-treatment, to throw Lucy into the arms of the chivalrous and warm-hearted Marston—a result that circumstances brought about more rapidly than the self-styled *hidalgo* could have anticipated.

Do you understand Don Sancho now, reader? I hope you do. As I have hinted, I shall have to show him to you in the performance of many discreditable actions. But for my sake do not think too harshly of him. If, when I shall have done with him, it should turn out that you regard him in a wholly detestable light, I shall have dealt unjustly with him. Bear with him and me, as I intend to go on abusing, despising, and liking him immensely, to the end of all these agreeable chapters.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GREAT METROPOLIS.

ABOUT four months after Marston Lynch's marriage—a period which happened to coincide with the height of the London season—a heavily laden cab drove up to the Bedford Hotel, Covent Garden; a very sensible thing for a cab to do at any time, supposing such vehicles to take the slightest interest in the welfare and comfort of their passengers.

The usual crowd of waiters and satellites were at the door immediately—a vista of spruce chamber-maids lining the entrance-hall, pleasantly terminating in a distant view of the landlady's own smiling countenance. Ere the majestic head waiter had well touched the handle of the cab door, and prepared the muscles of his body for his courtly bow, the door on the other side of the vehicle was burst open from within, and a tall handsome young lady, in elegant travelling *negligé* leapt out into the road, with supreme indifference to the orange skins and cabbage stalks which are indigenous to every inch of Covent Garden soil not absolutely protected by foot pavement.

She swept pass the somewhat awe-stricken officials with most perfect *nonchalance*, and was heard ordering a private room in a tone of voice that seemed to imply habits of undisputed command. She was soon seen tearing up the hotel staircase—hotly in chase of a flying chamber-maid—

at a rate of speed that would have made the action of less gracefully adjusted limbs in the highest degree undignified.

"Where is that girl off to?" said a female voice from the cab. And the dusty and travel-stained countenance of Mrs. Merripebbles peered through the open door, after the retreating form of her impetuous daughter—with an expression strongly resembling that of an anxious hen, whose brood of ducklings has taken for the first time to the water. "Do go and look after her, Mr. Merripebbles. You ought to be ashamed of yourself—a man of your age to have no more controul over such a mere child!"

Our meek old friend merely shrugged his shoulders. It was rather a difficult task, as he was somewhat too long in the back to sit comfortably in any earthly cab, and was, moreover, fairly built up in handboxes and carpet bags. His better half alighted, and darted in pursuit of Miss Carlton. The head waiter and his assistants, by a series of Layard-like exertions, succeeded in unearthing the ex-stockbroker from the various strata of luggage in which he had been embedded.

He straightened himself on the pavement with some difficulty—smiling like an amiable serpent who had been frozen and was grateful for the approach of warm weather.

But then came a terrible revulsion of feeling. His wife had left him to settle with the cabman! How ever was he to get through it?

Of course, the driver was the most truculent of his species. Such men always, instinctively, get hold of the mildest fares.

Merripebbles, in fear and trembling, requested the terrible man to name his price. It should be stated that those were the days of eightpenny mileage—for the name of Fitzroy had not yet earned the execration of cabmanity and that the vehicle had come no greater distance than from the South Eastern Railway Station.

"Well; the fare's six bob," said the driver cruelly,

and with a perfectly demoniac expression of countenance.

(Why do cabmen always speak of "the fare" with such a mixture of spitefulness and contempt, as if they considered it a mere drop in the ocean of their merited remuneration?)

Merripebbles almost shrank into his boots. He groped in his trowsers pocket and clutched nervously at what he felt to be eight shillings. If he only dared offer so contemptible a sum!

The cabman leant forward on his box, clutching the whip threateningly—as if he had half a mind to give Mr. Merripebbles a thrashing—and added in a more uncompromising tone of voice than before—

"And there's two women and all that blessed dollop of luggage."

Our old friend looked remorsefully at the carpet bags, and felt somehow as if he had committed an offence against society in getting married. He added another shilling to the handful, and proffered the combined amount with a quivering hand.

The cab was out of sight in a second.

Merripebbles feared that he had acted meanly—the man had evidently driven off in disgust, with all the honest pride of outraged poverty; and he was, perhaps, the father of a large family! Still, Merripebbles was glad to be relieved of the terrible presence. On the whole, he felt supremely happy. He had been dragged away from Chamounix at a moment's notice. He liked that above all things. His wife and step-daughter had been so kind as to bring him to London, and were going to take him to the play that very evening.

He was pleased beyond measure. Having made a point of looking after the housing of the luggage, he stood in the portico of the Bedford Hotel, gazing at the cabbages with an aspect of waggish benignity. He felt in a frame of mind for enjoying life. He rushed over the way, and purchased a pennyworth of cherries, which he enjoyed

under the piazzas with a relishing sense of dissipation.

Not for long, though. He was soon fetched by a waiter. "The lady" wanted to see him immediately.

Mrs. Merripebbles was seated in a private sitting-room, Marius-like, among the bandboxes and portmanteaus. Her husband nearly choked himself with a cheyrstone, and smashed the remainder of his purchase by sitting down on his coat pocket, where he had hurriedly concealed it. He suffered from moisture and "clamminess" of the pocket for days, not daring to divulge the source of his uneasiness.

"Well, Mr. Merripebbles, and pray where have you been?"

"My dear, I have been seeing after the things."

Merripebbles blushed, and felt himself the most hardened of liars.

"Stuff and nonsense, Mr. Merripebbles! The things have been brought in this hour (they had barely been twenty minutes in London): I see you are determined to drive me mad. After having brought me goodness knows how many miles to go to a theatre, and then leaving me at the mercy of goodness knows who."

Merripebbles thought of the cabman. He felt that he had, at least, undergone his share of the perils of the voyage. He was hurt; but, of course, did not say so.

"My dear," he said, in his usual deprecating manner, "you are a little flurried by your journey. Perhaps a cup of tea will set you right. I am sure, when you are more yourself, you will give your own common-sense a little play."

"I know what you mean, Mr. Merripebbles, and it's just like you. You were going to throw the blame on me for coming all the way from Chamounix to see Mr. Marston's new piece—as if I cared for such vanities. Lord save us, what would the Reverend Mr. Birch say? But you know very well that if we hadn't come Maud would have come without us."

"Then, my love—with all respect—don't you think we did quite right in coming with her?"

"Don't talk nonsense, Mr. Merripebbles: you encourage that girl in all her wilfulness and vanities. If she wanted to marry a sweep you would be ready to give her away to-morrow—dressed up as a Jack in the green, if she ordered you."

Merripebbles could not gainsay this humiliating hypothesis. His wife continued, in a sort of ill-tempered soliloquy—

"Upon my word I sometimes wish all newspapers were burnt, and their writers with them. Just because a stray copy of the *Sunday Times* happens to reach us, in a place where we were living an orderly and pious life, saying that this new play by young Mr. Lynch, of Longport, is expected to create such a sensation at the Cork-street Theatre. I know what you mean, Mr. Merripebbles, by your smiling, you are glad we came. You are like a baby—"

"My dear, I am pleased to think of our young friend being likely to succeed so well in the walk of life he has chosen. In spite of the Reverend Mr. Birch—who is a very able man—I do not see that there is anything in dramatic amusements—"

"You are simply delighted that you are going to the Theatre. That is all."

"My dear, if you wish it, I will stay where I am."

"Don't be ridiculous, Mr. Merripebbles, I would lay a wager you haven't even thought of getting a box: perhaps you would like myself and daughter to sit in the front row of the gallery?"

Merripebbles felt himself absolutely "cornered" in the discussion. He fell back upon his old remedy of rubbing his head and staring at nothing.

A waiter entered the room, and placed an envelope with a large seal on the table.

"Private box—Mr. Sams's," was his laconic explanation.

"Who is Mr. Sams?" inquired Mrs. Merripebbles.

The waiter stared. Not to know who Mr. Sams was—within a circuit of a hundred miles or so about any of the London theatres—was a condition of mental darkness which no Covent Garden waiter could wholly appreciate.

However, it was not in his engagement to be astonished at any eccentricity that the privileged *locataires* of the Bedford might indulge in. So he controlled his feelings, and said meekly—

"Number One, St. James's-street—Library, and Opera boxes."

"But how does he come to know us? I'm sure it's very kind of him—but I don't even know the name."

Now the waiter saw his way clearly.

"Young lady—Number Twelve—sent for hairdresser, and Private Box, Cork-street Theatre—first thing. Hairdresser up stairs, now. Only private box left—large let, this evening. Mr. Sams's compliments—three guineas. Coming!"

Exit waiter, precipitately.

Mrs. Merripebbles groaned.

"Three guineas! Well, to be sure, I shall expect the roof to fall in upon us for such sinful extravagance. It's enough to keep half-a-dozen poor families for a week! And only to think how moderate the boxes were at Milan and Genoa."

"I must say it is very extravagant on the part of Maud. We might just as well have gone to the public boxes."

"I dare say, Mr. Merripebbles, to be crowded among linendrapers and shoemakers. Lord forgive me for despising people in a humbler condition than ourselves! But you needn't be afraid. If Maud is extravagant, it is with her own money, and she has never been indebted to you for a farthing. There, I beg your pardon, Mr. Merripebbles. You needn't fly out. Because I happen to be hurried and worried by a stupid wicked expensive journey, you needn't make that an excuse for reminding me of my failings, which I see you were going to. It would be

much more manly of you to get out my black satin dress and white mantle, which you know I've laid on the top of the oilskin trunk, as well as I can tell you. Oh, here *is* Maud."

Maud Carlton had entered the room—splendidly and becomingly dressed in evening costume. She had grown more beautiful than I care about attempting to describe. Perhaps the reader will be kind enough to save me the trouble by remembering the rough sketch I gave of the girl, and filling it up with all the richness of womanly form and colour which his fertile imagination is capable of conceiving. He will scarcely imagine a more lovely, thoroughly-bred looking woman than Miss Carlton appeared as she entered that private sitting-room in Mrs. Warner's Bedford Hotel.

She carried in her hand a splendid bouquet, composed of flowers appropriate to her personality—magnificent in their simplicity—simple in their magnificence!

Mrs. Merripebbles at once forgot her ill-humour in excusable maternal pride. But she recovered it at the sight of the bouquet.

"Goodness sake. Maud—where have you been getting those splendid flowers?"

"At the proper place, I suppose. I sent out for a bouquet, and they sent me several to choose from. But are you not ready yet?"

"Ready! Why we haven't been three minutes in the house yet." (Merripebbles thought wonderingly of that hour he had been accused of wasting.) "I haven't even had time to order a cup of tea, for which I am dying—as you know perfectly well, Mr. Merripebbles."

"Then I shall be compelled to go without you," said Miss Carlton, with the most perfect calmness, as she proceeded to ring the bell.

"Go without us, indeed. You bad, improper girl. Mr. Merripebbles—perhaps if you will ask one of the menials of the house to show me a little attention, I may stand a chance of having my black satin and white mantle looked out."

By about five minutes to seven our three friends were comfortably installed in a commodious private box on the grand tier of the Cork Street Theatre. My readers know as well as I do that there is no such theatre in London—nor ever has been. But let it be remembered that I am a dramatic author by profession; and if I were to specify the particular theatre I mean by its real title, the manager would probably consider himself satirised, and refuse my next five-act tragedy. I am aware it may be urged that I run the risk of offending all the managers in London, by leaving it an open question, as each will most probably consider that I mean his identical establishment. But to this I can give no more satisfactory answer, than that it can't be helped!

And now, reader, lest the abrupt Bear-and-Fiddle-like termination of this chapter should give offence, I will behave towards you with greater candour than ever yet was displayed by mortal author: I will let you into the real state of the case which prevents my continuing at present. If, when you have learnt it, you shall harbour animosity towards me, your reputation for humanity is done for. The fact is, reader (upon my word and honour!) I have got the tooth-ache, and a dentist in human form awaits me in the breakfast parlour.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH MARSTON LYNCH GETS CALLED BEFORE
THE CURTAIN.

THERE is a street at the back of Burlington Gardens, Piccadilly, known as Cork-street, Most of my metropolitan readers will be aware that there is no such thing as a theatre in Cork-street, or within a circle of half of a mile round it. I have, therefore, chosen to name the particular temple of Thespis (that I believe, is the orthodox expression) at which Marston Lynch made his *debut* as a dramatic author—the Cork-street Theatre. My brother members of the Society of British Piece-makers will fully appreciate my reasons.

It was close upon seven o'clock, and Cork-street was in a tolerable state of commotion—particularly in the vicinity of the free list entrance to the theatre. That stern and uncompromising section of the British audience—the holders of orders—had assembled in large numbers at an early hour, and were already clamouring and disputing for their rights with their accustomed truculency. Nor were the more profitable doors (from a managerial point of view) without their numerous besiegers. For it was the first night of a new piece, by a new author, from which and from whom great things were expected.

It should be borne in mind that I am speaking of four-

teen years ago, when the London theatre was still an institution to be believed in. Probably, because there was yet a lingering tradition among good actors that it was much better policy for half a dozen of them to hang together, than to disseminate themselves over the country, that each might possess a theatre (and some supernumeraries) to himself. The Cork-street Theatre, at the period I speak of, was more conservative in this respect than any of its neighbours, numbering in its *corps dramatique*, no less than eight people, of both sexes, whom the public cared to see open their mouths and exercise their limbs. So that wherever a reasonable majority of these eight people could be induced to act in unison, the public felt some interest as to the result of their combined exertions, and came to look at them.

All those eight people are still alive and flourishing. But one of them persists in playing *Spartacus* and *Claude Melnotte* at the Great National Morning Herald Theatre, Houndsditch. The second is the only recognised *Othello* on the stage; but he has a weakness in favour of two hundred pounds a-night (with a stipulation of a bad *Iago*) which prevents his services being very frequently sought after. The third is the leading comedian at the Temple Bar Theatre, where he has it all his own way, being privileged, by the terms of his engagement, to refuse all farces—not containing a steam-boat scene wherein he can introduce his celebrated sea-sick business into an inverted umbrella. The fourth (an excellent *Grandfather Whitehead*) has been driven to California, in search of an audience capable of appreciating his performance of *Romeo* to his fat scorbutic wife's *Juliet*. The fifth left the stage in disgust on finding himself "put into" *Sir Oliver Surface*—a wilful insult to a man who had delighted the public as *Charles* for two-and-forty years. The sixth has a theatre of her own, as well as a house in May-Fair, a Brougham and four horses: the theatre is not supposed to be a profitable concern; but the lavish outlay in the matter of new pieces and costumes, fitted to the fair lessee by the

most skilful artists, continues unabated. The seventh rules paramount at the Mark Lane Theatre, where she does exactly as she pleases, to the chronic exasperation of the manager's wife. The eighth is disengaged; is only thirty-seven with the appearance of twenty-five; is a splendid woman, and a perfect genius; and is, moreover, willing and able, for a moderate salary, to play anything from *Tilly Slowboy* to *Lady Macbeth*. But there is no theatre for her to play in, and no actors to support her.

The Cork-street Theatre was shut up about eight, and pulled down about six years ago. Its manager passed Basinghall-street triumphantly last week as a tallow merchant. It was his fifth time of asking.

The theatre was filling rapidly, and the relentless crowd at the free list entrance were becoming unmanageable. It is a curious fact that the possession of a gratuitous admission to a theatre should invariably sour the sweetest temper, and convert mildness into ferocity. The ticket-of-leave man (as the holder of an order is now facetiously termed in box-keeping circles) always insist on the best place, the most slavish attention, and is infinitely more hard to please with the performances than the quiet, unassuming person who pays his money cheerfully to be amused. The ticket-of-leave man begins by looking upon the manager—to whose theatre, and by whose politeness, he is gratuitously admitted—as his chief enemy and oppressor. If he comes in good time he complains of the tyranny of being kept waiting. If he comes too late, and his order is refused admission (as he has been plainly told in writing that it will be, if presented after a certain time) he brands his arch-opponent as a thief and swindler, decoying people to the theatre under false pretences—the real object being to make them pay money for their evening's amusement—an imposition which the ticket-of-leave man revolts at, and, as a rule, will not submit to. If he finds the theatre full of people who have paid for their places—none of whom the officials will turn out to make room for him—he considers himself robbed, and

meditates legal redress. He has been known to knock down box-keepers. If he is in the habit of visiting the theatre frequently (of course on his usual terms) he resents the constant repetition of a popular performance as a personal inquiry. It is the business of that scoundrel the manager to provide him with variety. This being denied him, he has the ever present revenge of talking loud during the representation—and, if pushed to extremes, of hissing.

On this particular evening the ticket-of-leave man was exasperated beyond the usual bounds. Certainly he was rather hardly dealt with; but with his usual mad bull impetuosity, he butted his indignation at the wrong people.

Crowds of orders had been already admitted. All the best seats in the boxes were filled. It had been found necessary to return money to several people, for whom no reasonable accommodation could be arranged. Instructions arrived that no further orders were to be admitted.

A howl, as of baffled wolves with a barn door slammed in their faces greeted the announcement.

"This is infamous—a robbery—an imposition," said a perspiring greengrocer, brandishing a piece of paper (which he had received from a lodging-house landlady who owed him for vegetables; who had obtained it from a lodger who owed her for rent; to whom it had been given by the proprietor of a struggling journal who owed him for copy; who had accepted it from an actor who owed him for a puff; who had begged it from the author who owed him for nothing). "A pretty sort of thing for an order to be refused before seven o'clock. A nice way to make a new piece succeed. My order is the author's own name. Here it is, signed 'M. Lynch.'"

"I am very sorry," said the official, with perfect calm. "But Mr. Lynch has exceeded the usual author's privilege, and has given more orders than he was entitled to."

(So he had! Was it not just like him, reader?)

"Oh, I dare say," said one.

"A pretty excuse," said another.

"To get our money."

"Swindle!"

"Robbery!"

"I shall write to the *Times*."

"I shall pay to the pit, and if the new piece doesn't get hiss'd—it won't be my fault."

"I have orders," said the box-keeper, "to pass any one into the pit who wishes it."

"The pit! you insolent scoundrel!" said the green-grocer, who had a corpulent wife on his arm. "And do you suppose ladies are going to sit in your filthy pit?"

"Make way there!" said a stalwart, elderly personage, with a black moustache, and an Irish brogue, both of unmatched ferocity. "I'm for the press. They'll have to let me in. Two for the *Penny Cane*."

"I am sorry I cannot admit you," said the box-keeper.

"What;"—the Irishman fairly shuddered with astonishment at the audacity; "you refuse the *Cane's* orders?"

"Very seldom, sir," said a quiet, middle-aged gentleman in a resplendent over-coat, who was standing in front of the check-taker's wicket. "But sometimes we are compelled to limit our civilities to the editor's friends."

"Civilities! May be you think it's a favour you're granting. Do you think I come here for pleasure?"

"If not, for what else?"

"I am to write a notice."

"Mr. Brown, I believe, does that for your paper, and he came in five minutes ago with his own personal admission."

"What the devil is Mr. Brown to me? I belong to the Press—I show you my credentials—and, you mean to say, you refuse me admission?"

"Certainly."

"Then I shall complain to your manager."

"You had better," said the man in the dazzling coat, with an unmoved countenance.

"No impertinence, sir. I shall send up my card, and,

if I find he supports you in your insolence—let him look out——”

And the Irish gentleman strode away, looking pistols and shillelahs. Some humane bystanders felt that it would be a charity to warn the manager of the terrible doom so obviously in store for him. Had they heard the Irish gentleman's observation, as he took the arm of a disappointed friend, they would probably have felt relieved. The observation was as follows:—

“If the spalpeens ever get another advertisement out of me for their trumpery penny-rag—I'll eat all the hair-dye and pomatum in the shop.”

Two well-dressed young men elbowed their way through the crowd towards the wicket of entrance. One of them, who was very tall, and spoke with a slight provincial accent, presented a card to the check-taker, with some embarrassment, as if not altogether sure as to the dignity of the proceeding, and said—

“I have just received this from the gentleman whose name you see there. If it is not available for to night—my friend and I will take two stalls—or a private box.”

The check-taker passed the card to the quiet gentleman in the dazzling coat, who looked at it through a massive gold eye-glass.

“Ha! S. de Saumarez!” he said. “I didn't know he was in town. Shall we see him this evening?”

“He left us just now to go round by the stage-door,” said the gentleman who had presented the card.

“So—I'm glad of that,” said he of the coat. “Saumarez brings luck. I angur a good success from his coming. But I'm sure I don't know what to do with you two gentlemen——”

The two gentlemen looked as if they did not at all know what to do with themselves.

“I couldn't give you stalls for love or money,” continued the other. “The dress circle is full. And I can't think of putting friends of my friend Saumarez into the upper boxes.”

The friends of his friend evidently wondered very much what was to be their destination, and who their friend's friend was.

"You would be deafened in the orchestra, and have your brains knocked out behind the scenes. I am afraid, gentlemen, you will have to put up with my private box. My name is Toplin."

Mr. Tofts, of Longport, and his young friend, when they had recovered from the startling effects of this double denouement—bowed reverential homage to the well-known London Manager. Mr. Toplin wrote plays himself occasionally, and wrote them pretty well. Either from habit of dramatic composition or to keep himself in practice, he generally managed to mix up a little mystery and suspicion in the most trivial incidents in his life. Keenly relishing the astonishment of the two young provincials at the overwhelming honour he had thrust upon them, he motioned them to follow a key-bearing official.

They had to pass the stall entrance when a gentleman was just presenting vouchers for himself and a lady.

"Mr. Tofts, I hope to see you," said the gentleman, in a familiar voice—"Why, all Longport's here—the town must be empty."

"Good evening, Mr. Howker. Excuse me, I am rather in a hurry. Bless my soul, Miss Crooze! Who would have thought of seeing you here, and——"

Mr. Tofts was probably going to add, "and with—such a companion." Fortunately, the sentence was not completed.

Marian blushed a little, and stated that she had come to London to see a sick friend; and Mr. Howker having come up with some more gentlemen to see Marston's piece, had been so kind as to call and offered to conduct her to the theatre—adding, that of course, she shared the common anxiety of Marston's friends as to his success.

"Rather," said Howker, "There were fifteen of us from the Literary and Scientific came up by the Mail Express last night. Prebble's in the pit with a dozen more.

nine printers came up by the Parliamentary this morning. They've vowed to take in six men each to the gallery, and murder anybody who hisses."

"Indeed—I am glad to hear it—I am sure I wish every success. My friend and I are going to look at the piece from the MANAGER'S BOX! Good evening.

Mr. Tofts and his friend followed their conductor.

The Manager had been standing by, during the brief encounter of our old acquaintances. He looked at his watch. It was two minutes past seven. The overture had commenced. Mr. Toplin returned to the free list office to indulge in his favourite amusement of watching the agonies of the baffled Ticket-of-leave men who came too late. Do not judge harshly of him. Every hand that ever clutched an order he knew to be against him. Why should theatrical managers, of all classes in the world, be exempt from human weaknesses? As he stood gazing from a secure eminence at the sea of wrathful combinations below him, with much of the cruel serenity, with which Nero may be supposed to have looked down from the imperial box in the amphitheatre, when tigers were making good sport with the Christians, Mr. Toplin thus soliloquised—

"There's something in this young fellow. Friends flock to see his piece from all parts of the world. I just watched a box full, who have evidently come all the way from Italy on purpose. That shows a strong power of getting hold of people's affections. I tell him to confine himself to about twenty orders for the first night, and he sends in something like a hundred and fifty people. There's impetuosity, daring '*épanchement de cœur, élan,*' (Mr. Toplin was so proud of his French, that he even thought in it) about that. If this thing of his succeeds to night, I'll set him to work on a passion piece for Miss Melton."

The Cork-street Manager piqued himself (not without some reason) upon the astuteness of his perceptions; but more especially upon a power of building up theories

upon the most trivial data. He was accustomed to judge people's characters from the colour of their hair, the shape of their nails, their manner of sneezing, their pronunciation of certain diphthongs. Upon this perilous *ex pede Herculem* principle of reasoning, he would build his most serious engagements. It is needless to say that it led him frequently into the wildest mistakes, just as an astronomical calculation, if you happen to be the sixtieth part of an inch wrong in setting your instrument, you may find yourself a billion or so miles from the truth in your result.

The Manager's Box was very splendid, and luxuriously comfortable. Mr. Tofts felt that the dignified thing would be to lean back behind the curtain as if he was used to it; but the temptation to show himself under such enviable circumstances was too strong. Under the pretence of pointing out to his young friend (the inexperienced son of a wealthy cotton-broker, whom Tofts had brought up to London to astonish with, and bear witness to his own knowledge of town life) the beauties of the house and the celebrities assembled within it, Mr. Tofts leaned conspicuously forward.

"Do you see those two very young-looking men in the box opposite, with such very grey hair and such black moustaches, that make them look like two Mousquetaires of the Regency? One is Oxenford, the other Stirling Coyne. That little fierce-looking man, with the large light eyes, is Jerrold; that bull-headed-looking man, in the buttoned-up coat, is Captain Marryat. Rather a dull-looking fellow to wright such smart novels, eh?"

"Who's that sickly-looking man talking to him?"

"Hood," said Mr. Tofts, fearlessly. He had never seen Hood in his life, but he was determined that his gallery of celebrities should be well stocked.

"There's a gentleman nodding to you opposite."

"Ha! that's Albert Smith, one of the writers on 'Punch.' I met him at a party last season."

Mr. Tofts nodded violently; but it turned out that the

gentleman alluded to was nodding to some ladies in the next box. This created a feeling of awkwardness.

"There's a fellow in the pit nodding to you, Tofts, and no mistake."

So there was. The fellow had, moreover, a case bottle in his hand, from which he expressed, by the most exuberant pantomime, that he drank to the health of Mr. Tofts and to the success of the new piece.

Mr. Tofts drew in his head abruptly.

"Who is he, Tofts?"

"A printer fellow in Longport, who does my cards and circulars for me—that is, he did do them; but he gets no more work from me. D—n his vulgar familiarity!"

Don Sancho de Saumarez entered the box with his usual briskness, and his usual air of mysterious importance.

"It's all right," he said; "I've been round to all the clubs and all the newspapers. Everybody is here worth securing for a first night. I've introduced Marston to all the men worth knowing. The thing's quite safe. I've been slapping all the actors on the back. They all like their parts, and mean to go in and win. Mrs. Swann is in love with Marston, especially since I have told her he is recently married to a pretty girl; and it all depends upon her. There! they're ringing up; I must be off!"

Exit Don Sancho as he came, leaving Mr. Tofts and his friend with a vague impression that a brilliant success is about to come off, entirely and solely attributable to the diplomacy of Don Sancho de Saumarez. The audience settle themselves in their places and the curtain goes up.

I am not going to describe Marston Lynch's play, which was deservedly successful for one entire season, and has since been as deservedly forgotten. It was a fresh piece of writing containing some excellent points and situations, but marvellously loose in construction. We of the present fastidious generation that expect so much and get so little in the matter of dramatic art, are not to consider our aunts

and uncles fools for tolerating such pieces as they did. It should be borne in mind that their most indifferent points were garnished in those days with sauces such as we have no idea of. Who could conceive a shambling two-act farce, turning upon a sorry practical joke, and necessitating about twenty changes of scene, supported, in the present day by Robson, Murray, the Keeleys, Buckstone, Wigan, Mrs. Charles Matthews, Mrs. Stirling, and Miss Woolgar (I beg her pardon—Mrs. Alfred Mellon)? Yet in the much-despised, but oh ! how much regretted, old theatrical times, such combinations have been built upon the most wretched foundations. Mundens, Knights, Emerys, Johnstons, Jordans, Orgers, Glovers, have united to give the *cachet* of popularity to productions that a Surrey manager of the present day would not purchase at the rate of five shillings an act.

Marston Lynch's play had the great merit of affording half a dozen popular favourites the opportunity of displaying themselves in constant juxtaposition with one another in parts that suited them. When the company became disbanded, the play was worth nothing. But on its first production it was triumphantly successful. The active partisanship of such people as Mr. Tofts in the manager's box, Mr. Howker in the stalls, Mr. Prebble in the pit, and the nine printers with him, fifty-four friends in the gallery, may in some manner account for the unusual enthusiasm displayed on the occasion.

At the conclusion of the piece there was a vociferous call for the author.

Our hero made his first appearance on any stage, led on by Mr. Toplin, the manager, and Mrs. Swann, who had played the heroine. He needed some such experienced support to prevent him from walking through the footlights into the drum, for he seemed more dead than alive. As he neared the centre of the stage (which he afterwards declared he believed, at the time, to be at least ten miles across), a splendid bouquet struck him on the cheek. It had been hurled at him with vigorous precision of aim, by

a handsome young lady in a private box, who by her hearty and unconcealed enthusiasm, had distracted a good deal of the public attention during the performance. Mr. Toplin picked up the bouquet and handed it to Mrs. Swann, who with her celebrated giggle and toss of neck, insisted on Marston's acceptance of the favour. Marston dropped the bouquet three times. These proceedings elicited a round of applause (which Mrs. Swann appropriated) and much general merriment. The young lady who had thrown the bouquet seemed nevertheless to consider it a very good and *bonâ fide* transaction.

About half an hour after the conclusion of the piece, Marston Lynch came out of the Manager's private room, with a confused idea that he was walking on his hands, having left his head at home, and with a cheque for a hundred and fifty pounds somewhere in his boots. The matter-of-fact presence of Don Sancho de Saumarez, with Mrs. Swann on his arm—a very Golconda of diamonds, and a perfect Siberia of furs—recalled our bewildered hero to something like a consciousness of natural life.

"Come on," said Saumarez, sharply, "we're waiting for you. Oh, I forgot. Sir Frederick Manderville—Mr. Lynch."

Marston bowed to a resplendent mass of fine linen and whiskers—that bowed in return.

"We're going to sup at Sir Frederick's," said Saumarez, "and he insists on your coming with us."

Mrs. Swann endorsed the invitation with one of her most melting looks.

"I am very sorry," Marston stammered, "I really cannot—I am wanted at home—"

"Will your mother whip you?"

"No. But my wife will miss me—she was too ill to come to the theatre this evening: it is cruel keeping her in suspense so long."

"Pshaw! she's in bed along ago. If not, half-an-hour either way can't make much difference."

"Saumarez! you are a horror," said Mrs. Swann,

raising all the battery of her eyes upon Marston. "I couldn't retard such a deliciously interesting meeting by a single moment for worlds. Go home, sir! You don't deserve to have a brilliant success or a pretty wife. I am sure she is pretty."

"She is," said Marston, "and very good."

"There, do go home to her at once, if you ever wish me to speak to you again, or I shall believe you are as bad as the rest."

Mrs. Swann's eyes said "Come," as plainly as eyes could speak; and hers were very speaking eyes.

They had reached the street—a Brougham was waiting with the door open.

"Jump in," said Saumarez, "we can all four squeeze in for a short distance."

"But," Marston protested faintly.

"Don't be an ass—you needn't stay long, you know."

"Well, if I thought you wouldn't press me."

"There, you needn't get quite so close to Mrs. Swann. We're not so crowded as all that comes to. Jermin Street, Eh, Sir Frederick?"

"Yes—drive home."

"Don't touch me, or speak to me, or come near me," said Mrs. Swann, in anything but a pitiless tone of voice. "I declare you are all monsters alike—old and young."

At about four o'clock on the following morning a Hansom cab stopped at a house in Cecil-street, Strand, at the parlour window of which, dimly shown by a flickering light inside, the shadow of a little ringletted head was seen anxiously pressed against the glass. As the cab stopped the shadow disappeared, and, in an instant, the street-door flew open, and Lucy Lynch appeared, shivering with cold and terror.

The cabman was assisting Marston out of the vehicle.

"What is it," said Lucy, in a choking sickened voice, "Is he hurt?"

"Hurt, bless you, 'no, ma'am," said the driver. "Only a little bit cut."

"Cut! Where?" said the unsophisticated little wife, clutching her staggering husband in her arms, and manipulating his head and face with nervous rapidity.

"Had a drop too much, ma'am—that's all," the humane cabman explained. "He won't hurt. My fare's paid. Good night, ma'am."

Lucy half carried our hero (?) into the sitting-room, where he fell groaning in an easy chair.

"What is it, Marston: tell me?"

"Get me a razor and let me cut my throat," was the modest request of her husband.

"Don't talk like that—I have been very lonely and very frightened, but now I see you safe I don't mind it. Tell me, your piece——?"

"Greatest success of the season," hiccupped the drunken scribe, suddenly forgetting his remorse. "Called before the curtain—complimented by everybody—a hundred and fifty pounds. What's o'clock?"

"I don't know, but it's rather late."

"And you have been shivering here in the cold, while I—. Don't undress me—I am a degraded wretch, not worthy to be touched by such hands as yours."

"I am only loosening your collar, darling. Tell me one thing, Marston: in the middle of your triumph to-night—for I can see you have had a real one—did you once think of me?—or if you did, otherwise than as a burden and a stumbling-block in your path?"

"I thought of you all the time as an angel, and myself as a heartless demon, so help me Heaven!" Marston blurted out, with more truth than distinctness.

"Don't think like that—that would make me tiresome to you in the long run. Neglect me whenever you please—I don't call this neglect to-night—this is nothing; only love me—love me always."

Marston burst into a calf-like howl, and buried his face in his wife's bosom.

"Don't cry—I can't bear that; for after all, it is on my account. And you know I was never to cause you a pang or a remorse, much less a tear. But unless you help me in that, as in other things, I can do nothing. There, go to sleep so; and, in the morning, tell me all about the play and the actors."

Marston howled himself to sleep, muttering incoherently, at intervals, such remarks as "Infernal scoundrel!" "Hundred and fifty pounds!" "Called at eleven o'clock!" "Sir Frederick!" "Miscreant!" "Angel!" &c., &c.

Lucy sat up all night, watching her graceless spouse as he lay snorting and writhing in the large arm-chair; propping up his head; covering him with warm clothes; bathing his forehead, and listening to his breathing; keeping herself awake by frequently kissing the unconscious drunkard, and dwelling on his many virtues.

CHAPTER XXII.

MARSTON LYNCH AWAKENS ONE MORNING TO FIND
HIMSELF FAMOUS BUT POORLY.

As daylight began to show itself—which it does in London in a palpable form, like the Egyptian darkness—assuming a thick puddingy consistency, (suggesting the possibility of its being eaten with a spoon if it seem not too unwholesome); and as the round of a new day's troubles commenced their ill-omened ramble, from West to East, along the neighbouring strand—a fresh terror seized upon the little shivering wife whom we left studying the edifying spectacle of a man of genius reduced considerably below the moral and intellectual level of a hog. The people of the house! What if they should come and find him there in that condition ere she should be able to rouse him? The prospective shame was too horrible not to suggest its own remedy. The little woman decided, with the promptness of despair, that if Marston would not be roused, he must be carried, dragged, pushed, shoved, or bundled to bed, and that she must do it.

Roused, Marston decidedly would not be. Lucy tried a forlorn hope of shakes, kisses, and exhortations; and then bravely confronted the inevitable but apparently superhuman task before her.

An inebriated literary gentleman, doubled up in an easy chair, showing no signs of human vitality, save stertorous breathing, and an occasional symptom of requiring the use of a wash-hand basin, is certainly not an heroic sight. I am afraid, as a subject, the tableau would be rejected by

the judges in such matters, as utterly beneath the dignity of classic art. Yet, in my humble opinion, the group of that small woman, whose arms do not seem strong enough to nurse a fat baby, calmly measuring with her eyes those six feet of deadly drunken humanity, with no purpose visible in her countenance but the resolute one of getting the degrading bundle to bed, and out of the way of shame—contains in it the true elements of the sublime. Any sculptor of my acquaintance is welcome to the suggestion.

Lucy took a rapid but comprehensive glance of the field of battle; reviewed the state of her own forces; decided on her plan of attack, and went boldly into action.

Fortunately, their bed-room was on the ground floor, at the back of the sitting room. The easy chair containing the deboshed poet, was at about three yards from the door of communication. The bed was at about the same distance on the other side. First of all, Lucy threw the door wide open. Then she "turned down" the bed, carefully clearing the intervening floor of all obstacles. This achieved, she returned on tiptoe (for there must be no noise) to the fallen hero, whom she deliberately proceeded to try to lift. Marston moved about as much as Saint Paul's would have done if she had blown against the walls of that edifice with a pair of toy bellows. With a clearness of inductive reasoning, which would not have discredited Mahomet, she decided that if Marston could not be got out of the chair, the chair must go with him. The necessity for Marston being forced to go to bed proverbial wisdom had long since decided for her. It was evident that the bed would not come to him.

Mrs. Marston Lynch lifted up the carpet, that the castors of the easy chair might roll more easily. She summoned all her strength for a grand push. The chair moved at least eighteen inches; but it made a noise on the bare boards. This would never do. Mrs. Lynch carefully laid down the carpet again, and commenced pushing once more. The chair moved at a much slower rate, but, this

time, quite noiselessly. About thirty successive pushes were enough to bring the chair and its senseless burden to the bed side.

Then our indomitable little friend flew back to the sitting room, and removed every trace of disorder with the skill and rapidity of a story-book fairy. She closed the door noiselessly; bolted it inside, and courageously faced the minor difficulty of getting Marston into bed.

On entering upon this task she again reminds us of the nursery tales. But this time, instead of the benevolent and all-skilful fairy, she appears in the character of the witch's victim—commanded to make a rope of sand, to fetch water in a broken pitcher, or to catch a salmon in a net of cobwebs.

Was the princess in the fairy tale ever daunted by the apparent impossibility of the task set for her to do? Do we not always see her set forth, pitcher in hand, to the work, with evident faith that some good power will intervene to make the crazy vessel watertight? Does she not quietly spin the cobwebs into threads, and sit down to knit it into meshes with a sad but trusting heart—never doubting but that some good-natured salmon will allow himself to be caught by the flimsy device.

Lucy had brought her husband to the edge of the bed. She divested him of such clothing as she could manage (men's hard waistcoat buttons were terrible trying to her little fingers). She bathed his temples with Eau-de-Cologne; of course kissed him several times—as if *that* would do any good!—and waited patiently till the unwieldy ship she had undertaken to convey to the harbour of Bed should, by some process of lurching or tacking, facilitate her exertions.

The wished-for occasion arrived; Marston suddenly started up and howled dismally. Exhausted by the brief paroxysm, he fell, with at least half his weight, on the bed. The artful Lucy had watched her opportunity. Even her little arms had sufficient power of leverage to hoist the remainder of the inanimate mass into a horizontal posture.

The task was achieved. Lucy was half dead—but what of that? Her husband was in bed—and tucked in, nobody but herself being a whit the wiser.

Mistress Lucy Lynch looked very wan by the now broad daylight, and very fragile—aye, and alas! very ill. But she slipped off her pretty gossamer robes with marvellous rapidity, and, with a radiant face, accompanying her movements by the *sotto voce* humming of a pleasant tune—which was then popular, and to which words had been written by Marston Lynch Esq., she flopped on her knees, remaining in that position, I regret to say, but a very short time—and was soon nestling by the side of the unconscious sot, who was life, and death, and earth, and heaven to her. And Mrs. Lynch slept soundly and happily for the space of six hours. Merely waking every ten minutes to assure herself that her drunken darling was not suffocated.

At the expiration of the time mentioned, Mistress Lucy was awakened by a violent ringing at the street door bell; and as she hurried on her clothes with a dreadful sense of late hours and dissipation, for which she alone was to blame, she heard a well-known voice in the sitting-room humming cheerful melodies. With a few magic touches she succeeded in investing herself with all the orthodox graces of a morning beauty. Except, alas! the essential one of bloom on the cheeks—and hastened to give Sancho de Saumarez a cordial welcome.

Lucy liked Saumarez, a weakness that was shared by most men and women who had ever spoken to him. If, in the strongly perceptive, womanly side of her character, she felt that he was not a man to be trusted, yet, in her more child-like and predominate phase, she was never proof against his exhaustless *bonhomie* and superficial kindness. He was just the sort of visitor she would have liked to receive first on this trying morning. She knew him for the kind messenger who would never come charged with any but comfortable tidings. In the absence of those he would stop away.

Saumarez looked really what is vulgarly called "a sight for sore eyes." He was attired in the choicest of morning costume. His moustache was a prodigy of blackness, his cheeks a miracle of the closest shaving; his linen, of course, was faultless. He appeared full of life, health, and spirits.

He was sitting in an easy chair, half buried in newspapers which he had brought with him.

Lucy divined the truth at once. These were the day's papers, containing critiques upon Marston's piece. They were favourable. Otherwise the *couleur de rose* philosopher would never have marred his pleasant reputation by bringing them.

Saumarez leaped up from his chair on Lucy's entrance, and commenced acting a lively scene in the *genre* of low comedy.

First of all he hid his face in his hat, as if ashamed to meet public scrutiny. He then ran into the corner with his face to the wall, heaving his shoulders as with contrite sobbing. Then he looked round furtively between his fingers, and turned back to the wall—howling as in the deadliest terror, and kicking out his left leg spasmodically in true clown fashion.

Lucy laughed heartily.

Saumarez turned briskly at the sound, and made a grimace expressive of rapturous relief. Then he shook his head in the style of a harlequin, feeling it carefully with his hand, as if doubtful of its being still on his shoulders.

"Why, it isn't snapped off, I declare," he said. "It's what I fully expected. But I suppose I'm to catch it in some other fashion. Please to give it me at once, and get it over. Only be merciful, because I didn't go to do it. And remember I have a wife and sixteen small children to support—eight of them twins under the age of six months."

Don Sancho affected to weep, using his forefinger as a handkerchief.

Lucy, highly amused and cheered by his tomfoolery—as he intended her to be—held out her hand.

Saumarez put his hands in his pockets, drawing himself up with comic dignity.

“No! I won’t have it. It’s flat hypocrisy. I am the ‘husband’s friend.’ I was spoken of not ten minutes ago as ‘*that* Saumarez,’—probably as ‘*that* wretch Saumarez.’ It is true that *that* Saumarez doesn’t produce a successful comedy twice a week, and doesn’t experience the minor pleasure of seeing a friend produce one every night. And on such an occasion if *that* Saumarez did happen to get drunk and disorderly, and drag his friend into the vortex—but never mind! I came here on purpose to be pitched into. You are requested to lay it on mildly, and with the smallest possible quantity of brine in the pickle.”

“Was the piece very successful, then?”

“The greatest success for years, my dear Mrs. Lynch,” answered Saumarez, with momentary seriousness; “and, indeed, you ought to be very highly congratulated. But I have brought you all the newspapers. They will tell you what the world thinks of your husband. I suppose he is not out of bed yet?”

“Oh dear, no.”

“Ah! there’s the difference between old and young sinners, you see. I was up at seven—and if you’d seen *me* last night—well, no matter. Forgive us our sins, say I.”

“I only hope he may not be seriously ill,” said Lucy, in a quivering voice.

“I beg your pardon. Ill? If that is his idea we’ll soon put a stop to it.”

Saumarez seized the poker and tongs and entered the bedroom, making an insufferable *charivari* as he shouted,

“Hi! Marston! Thieves! Murder! Fire! You’re wanted at Court! Here’s the police!”

Marston opened his eyes with a dismal expression of terror; moaned, “Oh Lord, what’s that? Let me alone;” and went to sleep again.

"Do you think I had better send for a doctor?" Lucy asked, tremulously.

"Send for a doctor? Send for a white elephant."

"Here, Monsieur le Malade! you're to put your feet in gruel, and swallow a mustard poultice immediately."

"Please to let me alone," was again murmured from the blankets.

"Oh, indeed! Did you ever happen to taste cold pig, my friend? If not you will soon become acquainted with that savoury viand. Stop, I'll try another method, as the cookery books say. Hey! Marston! (very loud in the sleeper's ear) the *Times* says you've stolen your plot from Beaumont and Fletcher."

Marston jumped up in bed and stared round him ludicrously.

"I thought that would do it. Here, drink your soda water, you drunken rascal" (Lucy had brought in a bottle of that refreshing fluid with her. I am afraid its being kept on the premises and her knowledge of its utility is a bad sign), "and then try and swallow some breakfast. I found your bloaters cold on the table, so I put 'em down to the fire."

Marston took the soda water with a hand that rocked to and fro, and put the glass with some difficulty to his lips. The liquid disappeared like a drop of water on a heated bar.

Marston remarked that he felt his head coming in half.

"Naturally enough: walking across the stage with the glare of the footlights before you, and deafening applause on all sides of you, is enough to give any one a headache. Eh, Mrs. Lucy?"

"Did Marston do that?" Lucy inquired, with pleasure, opening her eyes.

"All that—aye, more; had a bouquet thrown him."

"How I should like to have been there."

"Well, but first for the Yarmouth bloaters. What hol the castors. Let there be mustard galore, and cayenne shall be hot in the mouth. Does Mrs. Lynch imagine that because she is virtuous there shall be no more—thingamy

and what's-a-name? Give me the fakements. I have a receipt for a patent sauce, which I intend publishing in shilling bottles, called *La Sauce du Matin Après*, or Morning After Sauce. I have drawn up an advertisement, headed, 'No more hot coppers!' and 'Do you bruise your wives yet?' I hope he was too drunk to use the poker when he came home, Mrs. L? You may see me making it, if you like, only don't blow the secret. For none is genuine unless signed by me, Elizabeth Lazenby. What a jolly table Elizabeth must keep. I wish she'd marry me, and leave me all her pickles."

Rattling on in this manner, Saumarez ransacked Lucy's little cheffonier of every savoury condiment he could lay his hands on, and proceeded to mix his invaluable preparation, with much mock solemnity. He pronounced cabalistic words over the salt; he took out his watch, and appeared absorbed in counting the seconds which the mustard was dissolving in the vinegar. He affected despair when he found he had put the catsup in first, instead of the anchovies, and threatened to commit suicide, *à la Patel*, by falling on a table-spoon.

Marston watched him through the open door, laughing and moaning alternately. Lucy had entirely forgotten her fatigues and misgivings; the lively visitor had, as it were, cleared the moral atmosphere for her. She felt inexpressibly grateful to him for making so light of what she had feared was an irremediable dishonour.

When Saumarez had put the finishing touch to his culinary operations, he twisted up a newspaper into the form of a cook's nightcap, which he gravely put on his head; he stuck the corners of another into his waistcoat pockets for an apron. Lucy was in ecstasies, Marston roared, and begged him to desist, for pity's sake.

The amateur *chef de cuisine* arranged his breakfast delicacies on a waiter, and marched into the bed-room with it, falling upon one knee as he presented the repast.

"What a fool you are, Saumarez. How you have made my head ache."

"Ah! that's a part of my treatment—homœopathic you know. Pitch into the military gentleman from Yarmouth. How is he?"

"Prime."

"Can you eat him?"

"Two of him."

"Ah, but one's a dose. You did not think you could eat five minutes ago, did you?"

"I turned sick at the very idea."

"It's the effect of my magic sauce, which I learnt the secret of from the Chalder Arabs of the Great St. Bernard, in Madagascar. Eat gently—not so much at a time, and I'll facilitate digestion by the fumes of incense. First of all, I will read you the opinion of my night-cap on your last night's production. You shall then hear what my apron has to say on the same subject."

"To be sure. What was that you said about the *Times*? I was scarcely awake."

"You were not awake at all my friend, and not likely to be, if I hadn't let off a roaring, splitting lie in your ears. Mrs. Lucy, I will trouble you for the rest of the papers. Thank you. You are now requested to draw near and listen to the words of wisdom—wisdom so wise, that it is able to digest and publish its oracle between the hours of one and three in the morning. We will begin with the *Times*. Silence in the galleries, if you please."

Marston suspended his breakfast, and Lucy held her breath. Saumarez began to read.

Marston's ears tingled with astonished delight, as he listened to a rapid and masterly analysis of his play, illustrated by happily chosen extracts, and interspersed by most flattering eulogies. A *résumé* of the author's past career was given, and from it good auguries were drawn as to his future. The piece and its writer were unequivocally pronounced valuable acquisitions to the London stage. Then followed remarks upon the actors, who were praised and counselled with what seemed admirable

justness of discernment. Some strictures upon minor blemishes in the work followed, which Marston felt to be as encouraging as the praise. There was a joyous tone of animal spirits about the whole, as though it were the work of an enthusiastic kindly nature delighted with an opportunity of awarding praise with sincerity.

Marston fell back upon his pillow somewhat overcome. Lucy clutched the sheet from the hands of the reader, and made some demonstration of kissing it. Repressing this impulse, she retired to a corner, to read the notice with her own eyes.

There was a silence for some seconds.

"Well?"

"Well! It is too well. I never expected such praise from such a source. But is it not too good to be sincere?"

"I would stake my life on its sincerity. Whenever ——— tells you clearly what a piece is about, who were the actors in it, and what they played, and finishes up by declaring the thing worthily successful, you may depend upon it he means what he says. ———'s weak point is that he cannot bear to abuse people. Perhaps he knows that the power he wields is terrible, and is timid of using it against the weak, being of a merciful disposition. When he has a bad piece to criticise, he says nothing about it except its title, but amuses you with some pleasant anecdote of Edmund Kean or Aristophanes—quite drawing you off the unpleasant scent of a failure. He has been very much abused for not praising bad things; but I never knew him abuse a good one. On the contrary, he relishes a spark of genius like a glass of good wine; and a blaze of it like a bottle. He is a very strong man with a very big fist. He scorns to knock a little fellow down with it; and nothing pleases him so much as the chance of exercising his muscular palm, by vigorously slapping a Titan on the shoulder."

"I wish I was a Titan!"

"You are a pitiful hearted one. There! kiss your

dish of butter, and be quiet, while I read to you from the *Morning Appetiser*."

The *Appetiser's* notice consisted of a *resumé* of the new piece as conscientiously and lucidly written as that of the *Times*. This was followed by a statement that the production had been rapturously received by a crowded and enthusiastic audience, and might be considered established as a genuine and enduring success. This much declared, the writer proceeded to state, in a very straightforward way, and giving his reasons, that he had not liked the piece at all himself, and had left the theatre wondering by what stimulants the unmistakable delight of the audience had been excited.

"That sounds fair enough," said Marston; "though it is decidedly not complimentary."

"Why not? There is an artistic and detailed exposition of your piece. Anybody can understand what it is like from reading the article, followed by a faithful record of its approval by the public. Having fulfilled this important duty, the writer proceeds to give his own independent opinion. Why should he be bullied into liking your piece by the bravos of fifteen hundred people? This man does his work more honestly than any of the theatrical so-called critics I know of. He knows that his primary business is that of a reporter. If the public had hissed your piece and he had liked it, he would have been equally faithful."

"Well he seems a good sort of fellow—I'm sorry he didn't like it. That's all."

"You needn't be. He is a man without humour, full of *bonhomie*, animal spirits, and kindness, a capital scholar and logician, but utterly deficient in that Other Half of the Intellect which Carlyle considers necessary to make a perfect man. For him, Molière, Hood, and Rabelais are mere buffoons and scoffers. He has written admirably on Shakspeare. But he only tacks the master on his heroic side. The glorious "carpenter's scenes" of clowns, fools, and toppers, I believe he would like to cut out altogether. It strikes me he must have framed some-

where in his study that passage in Milton's preface, wherein the respectable John asserts his patronising approval of tragedy as a means of poetical expression, provided it be not degraded by the admixture of "comick stuff." And now we will proceed to the *Illustrious Woodcutter*."

"But the *Woodcutter* is a weekly paper."

"There you see the advantage of producing a piece on a Thursday. You get noticed in the weeklies. I have bought all the country editions. Listen to the voice of the Woodman :—

"On Thursday night was produced at the Cork-street Theatre, a comedy in three acts, entitled * * * which will add new lustre to Mr. Toplin's already brilliant managerial campaign. Nothing could exceed the splendour and magnificence of the dresses and appointments which indeed surpasses all the former efforts of Mr. Toplin's management; the plot of the piece is as follows. * * *

The author whose services Mr. Toplin has been so fortunate to secure for the literary execution of this work is Mr. Marston Lynch, a young gentleman from the North of England, of whom we predict great things if he will only continue to write for this admirably conducted theatre, the well chosen company of which seems so curiously adapted to the interpretation of his inspirations. The actors were wonderfully fitted with their parts, an additional proof—if any were needed—of the managerial skill by which the theatre is swayed. Mr. Toplin could not have found a better representation of the gloomy baronet than Mr. ———, whose delivery of the well written speech at the end of the second act convinces us that he possesses capabilities of a very high order for the interpretation of the poetical drama. We advise Mr. Toplin to think of this. The piece was thoroughly successful, and on the fall of the curtain, in answer to an enthusiastic call, the young author was led on to the stage by Mr. Toplin himself, a grateful tribute on the part of the established favourite to the merit of the inexperienced neophyte?"

"There's a good deal of Mr. Toplin in that. But I suppose it is well meant. Who wrote it?"

"Old Slimey. And the turn of the notice is a safe indication that he has sent in a five-act tragedy in blank verse, which Toplin has not yet opened. As soon as Toplin has opened it—and sent it back as he of course will—Slimey will begin abusing the Cork-street Theatre and

everybody connected therewith, and continue to do so till he has another manuscript nearly ready. Then he will begin to soften down in his tone, and, by the time the fifth act is stitched together, will be as civil as he is now. Slimey manages to write about three unactable tragedies per annum, and the tide of his favourable criticism ebbs and flows accordingly."

"Poor old boy!"

"Poor old boy as much as you please. I can sympathise with the incapable as well as anybody. But Slimey's meanness is not confined to mere crawling. He has a little sly bottle of venom that he can uncork to oblige his patrons when occasion serves. He is a poor apothecary if you please, but he will sell his poison to Tybalt, for purposes of assassination, as readily as to Romeo for those of suicide. The other day two pieces were produced at different theatres, founded on the same subject. One was by Slimey's editor; the other by an outsider. That by Slimey's editor was bad and was damned. The other was successful, and is filling the theatre after a run of a hundred and odd nights. Well, simply to toady his patron, Slimey wrote a notice, that, for him, was really ingenious! in which he compared the two pieces and excused what he pretended was a common failure, on the score of bad selection in their mutual subject. You left off reading with an impression that Slimey's master (who was named at full length, with a beautiful and comprehensive digest of his past and possible-past literary achievements) must have written the more successful piece of the two, and that the nameless writer was answerable for the imbecilities of the notoriously damned one."

"You are very severe," said Marston.

"I think it a beautiful notice," said Lucy.

"Oh! that's the case, is it? Then I see the patient has had enough soothing medicine, and is quite prepared to submit to the actual cautery. Look out! Here's the *Asinæum* coming. *Gar la plume du corbeau!*"

And Don Sancho opened the terrible publication alluded

to, with an explosive pop in Marston's face, as if it were a piece of ordnance.

"Well," said the latter, "I'm not dead yet. Let us hear what Peter McGrawler has to say."

"Peter McGrawler, young man," said the visitor, with mock gravity, "as you ought to know, was dethroned years ago, and accepted office under Government as the public executioner. But Peter, though he unquestionably had his failings, was a perfect Julius Cæsar compared with the crowd of nameless pretenders—slaves, eunuchs, and barbarians—who have disputed his empire in these days of the *Asinæum's* Decline and Fall. The threadbare purple, at present, hangs, in a looped and windowed condition, on the shoulders of an ignoble Dacian, named Hayporth Dibbs."

"Hayporth Dibbs. Good Heavens!"

"The good Heavens have not interfered in the business, you may depend; but for some wise purpose have chosen to shut their eyes to its transaction. Come! what have you done to offend Hayporth?"

"To offend him—I don't know. But surely you don't mean to say that it's that fellow from Longport?"

"Hayport is of Longport origin. *Après?*"

"But he is an ass!"

"Then you ought to have kept away from his hands. But he isn't quite an ass, or he could not have raised himself from nothing to be, in a few months, the editor of the *Asinæum*, which is not too much of a something I grant you."

"But how on earth, man—You must be joking! It seems only the other day that this fellow was barely Howker's equal at the Essay and Discussion Meetings of the Longport Institute—the standing joke and butt of all newspaper offices, for his persistent determination to appear in print on the slightest pretence, and the sorry figure he cut there when allowed to show himself. He has not the brains to write a police report with sufficient clearness to make you understand which was the magistrate and which the prisoner."

“Perhaps not. But he has sufficient impudence to edit the *Asineum*, and would have to command the Channel Fleet if he could get the chance—which chance he would get if it were to be had for asking for. The other day, indeed! No doubt it seemed only the other day to several noble Romans, that the long-legged Maximin had been the fellow-blackguard and perhaps the butt of gladiators and footracers in the Chersonese. But he was the Emperor of Rome for all that—lopping off their heads, stealing their virgins, and confiscating their goods, with all the exuberant zest of a *parvenu* in power—just such as Hayporth himself loves to exercise. It is true there are these differences between Maximin and Hayporth—that the former was a big man. In these respects the parallel is striking. Maximin attracted the attention of a Roman Emperor in a provincial tour, by his indomitable strength and patience in keeping up with the imperial chariot during a drive of Lord knows how many miles. By a similar feat of endurance the raw-boned, bare-legged, ‘gillie wet foot’ of a northern manufacturing town—whom we now see entrusted with power, for life and death, over the reputations of the greatest writers of the day—managed to plod himself into notice. A literary magnate, who is a wit and nothing else (but to be a wit is something)—who only lives by breathing toadyism—went down to Longport for change of his peculiar vital air. He presided at *soirées*, at grave lectures. He was flattered, and fooled to the top of his bent. Hayporth Dibbs—then the mere outsider of the local press—the Triton amongst Mechanics’ Institute minnows that you knew him—having carefully tucked up his corduroys, prepared himself for a run, to accompany the triumphal car as long as it was in motion. Hayporth’s wind was of the longest. He succeeded in forcing himself upon the great man’s notice by the intolerable loudness of his shouts. To drop my Roman metaphor, and take up another, he fastened himself upon the unprotected Lion, during the latter’s stay in the North, and would not be shaken off. The Lion was annoyed perhaps. But with

the tenacity of *the flea*, Hayporth combined the usefulness of the Jackal—so he was tolerated. The Lion returned to London, and on reaching his residence found Hayporth waiting for him on the doorstep (I have changed my metaphor again), wagging his tail, and with his head crouched abjectly between his fore paws. Such a very devoted cur could not be kicked into the street. The great man admitted the faithful animal to his already well-stocked kennel; and, finding that the creature could eat toads, fed him bountifully. Hayporth has since worn the great man's collar, and has indeed displayed all those qualities which we agree to consider noble in the dog, but which we call cur-like in the man. He is devoted to his master's interests. He is always ready to fawn upon that master's friends. He will even submit to being kicked or cuffed by the *amis de la maison*—nay, by the very grooms and shoe-blacks attached to the premises. But he will snap fiercely at strangers—would worry any man he was set on to attack by his proprietor. He is very jealous of other dogs, whom he will maltreat ruthlessly if they happen to be his inferiors in size and weight. Cats, rats, rabbits, and such minor animals he loves to destroy, in the very wantonness of his natural ferocity. He is a very well-bred dog, and waits prettily for all the bones and crumbs that fall from his master's table. Amongst other things he has 'begged,' sitting up on his hind legs, for the editorship of the *Asineum*, and they have thrown it to him."

"A very Æsopian apologue. But surely to be abused by such a man is no discredit?"

"Avast heaving! There you have a beautiful illustration of our glorious anonymous system. It is not Hayporth Dibbs, the ex-counter jumper, who abuses you, but the powerful *Asineum*—a time-honoured literary tribunal, before whose edicts Scotts, Byrons, Thackerays, and Dickenss have trembled. If, indeed, the public knew who was the High Priest of the Oracle, and of what materials his assistant clergy are composed—gangling school-boys, 'discarded, unjust serving-men, younger sons of

younger brothers, revolted tapsters, and ostlers tradefallen'—then, indeed, the days of the *Asineum*, and all such phantoms, would be numbered. But as it is—you had better read his article."

Marston did as he was requested, biting his lips and changing all sorts of colours during the process.

"It is very severe," he said, throwing the paper down, when he had finished. "Very unkind, as I feel, in its intention; and yet I am bound to admit that it is thoroughly just."

"Just! How do you mean?"

"All the faults he has mentioned are those of which I have been miserably conscious—only unable to remedy."

"Then the next time you want a joint of meat I advise you to send an experienced carrion crow to market for you. You may rely upon the morsels of his selection being in a genuine 'gamey condition.' But answer my starting question. Apart from the indelible injury of being a cleverer fellow than himself what have you done to annoy Hayporth?"

"Lord forgive me. I'm afraid I have—"

"What?"

"Chaffed him in the *Whipping Post*."

"I thought as much. Take my word for it—to turn the fable of Cadmus topsy turvy—you will find every letter you have ever sown in that lively young publication spring up in the form of dragon's teeth, that will beset your path through life. But I have now got you into proper training for the day's exertions. Get up and dress; I want you to come out with me on a mission."

Saumarez retired to the parlour. Marston was soon dressed to perfection. You see, he had such a skilful and devoted little valet-de-chambre.

Lucy handed her husband his hat and gloves with such a wistful look, which he immediately translated into "How I should like to go out with you!"

He kissed her, assuring her that he was going out on business—the business of Saumarez. Lucy said,

"Never mind, she was very well at home. Could Marston give her any money?"

Money! How thoughtless of him to be sure. Of course he could, any amount of it. But he had only Toplin's unchanged check.

"Got any money, Saumarez?"

"Heaps! What do you want?"

"Something for this little spendthrift to go shopping with. What's that? A ten pounder. That'll do. I'll give it you when you get out. There, Puss, Don't say I never gave you anything. You may spend it Good bye."

At a few yards from his own door Marston met the postman, who handed him a letter. It was from Howker, apologising on behalf of Miss Crooze and himself, for not calling. They had come up to see Marston's capital piece, but Miss Crooze had to leave for Longport by the early train. Common gallantry compelled him, Howker, to return with the lady, in the capacity of protector.

"So! that's all right," said Saumarez, when Marston had read the letter.

A few minutes afterwards Marston found himself wondering what his companion had meant.

When the servant of the lodging-house came up to ask the lady in the parlours what she would like for dinner, the lady in the parlours replied that she did not feel well, and would wait till tea time, as she did not think Mr. Lynch would dine at home. Lucy hid the ten pound note carefully in an obscure recess. She did not go shopping at all; but sat in doors all day learning the more favourable of the critics on the husband's piece by heart.

"I wonder if he will come home this evening in time for me to see it!" she said to herself.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OLD FRIENDS AND NEW FACES.

"THE Merripebbles are here."

"You don't mean that? Have you told Lucy?"

"No: and I don't want you to do so. That's why I am so glad those Longport people have gone back. They might have told her."

"I don't see what you are driving at."

"I will pull up in four words—I am in love."

"You!"

"Even I—Apemantus, the cynic—Alcibiades, the Sybarite—whatever you please. And with Maud Carlton."

"Little Maud?"

"Little Maud is as tall as Mrs. Siddons, and as lovely as Juno. What are you grinning at?"

"Nothing. Only it really seems so very odd. It's true I forgot she has four thousand charms per annum."

"She has six thousand pounds per annum; and I could marry a woman worth twenty thousand pounds per annum to-morrow, if I cared to sell my valuable person and liberty for such considerations," said Don Sancho, in a somewhat hurt and and thoroughly conceited tone.

"My dear fellow, I didn't mean to be offensive. I am sure I congratulate her, no you. But—"

"You don't see yet what I am driving at! We have one or two corners to turn before it will be fairly in sight. I am now taking you to visit the family; and I ask you, as a friend—and by way of a great favour—

simply to conceal from them the fact of your being married."

"Good heavens! What for?"

"Well, I must tell you—though it involves a humiliating admission—it was Maud who threw you the bouquet last night."

"By Jove! How like her."

"Rather more so than is agreeable to all parties. To come to the point, the case stands thus. I have been thrown frequently in contact with her during my travels of the last two years. The result I have told you. I have not yet declared myself, nor will I till I have ascertained the real state of her affections. She treats me with uniform kindness, but I more than half suspect she is sick in love with—You!"

"Nonsense!"

"I should like to hope so. Still, I wish to make sure. Her dragging her friends to England, as she evidently has done, merely to be present at the first night of your play, is rather suspicious. I want to see you together, with no idea on her part that you are a bird already brought down and trapped."

"Surely you don't want the girl to be entrapped to making love to a married man?"

"Don't be too conceited, my young friend. Miss Carlton has too much good taste and maidenly delicacy to make love to any man. But I have pretty sharp eyes—most lovers have—and I think I shall be able to judge from one, or at the outside two, interviews, the real state of the case. If my worst suspicions are confirmed, I shall simply desert from my intentions. Fortunately, the world is pretty large, and travelling is cheap. I will not have any man's *leavings*—*prenez le mot*—and I will try to forget her. Here we are at their hotel. Do you promise, before we enter? Mind, I consider this as a test of friendship—of the one manly friendship I hold dearest."

Saumaray wrung Marston's hand, and looked extremely sentimental.

Marston, whose nature was as open as the day, and who abhorred all kinds of artifice and concealment, felt something jar within him at the strange proposal. But the artful Saumarez had attacked him on his weak sides of vanity and sentiment. Marston plucked up his collar, twirled his moustache, returned the cordial pressure of his companion's hand, and gave the required promise.

They entered the comfortable parlour of the snug-looking Bedford Hotel, and sent up their cards to Mr. Merripebbles.

They were shown into a handsome sitting-room, where Maud, seated in an easy chair, was seen half buried in a chaos of newspapers. Marston recognised them as duplicate copies of the collection Saumarez had brought to his own lodgings in the morning. Mrs. Merripebbles was in a remote corner groaning over an unconsoling book, by the Rev. Mr. Somebody, whereof the burden was the inevitable perdition consequent upon the indulgence in stage plays. Old Merripebbles was wagging his head over the the week-before-last's *Punch*, and looked supremely happy.

The three rose to welcome their visitors according to their various forms of expressing hospitality.

Maud advanced with her two statue-like arms cordially outstretched. Marston placed his hands in hers with a feeling that somehow they had no right there.

"Good God! how beautiful!" was his inward exclamation.

"How kind of you to come and see us," said Maud, as with beaming eyes she scrutinised Marston from head to foot with intense satisfaction. "How well you are looking! I told you he would come, mamma, though he is the greatest man in London to-day. You see we know all about it from the papers."

Mrs. Merripebbles was heard to mutter something about "indelicate." Then she threw down the Reverend Somebody's book against theatres, and proceeded to cuddle Marston in a very affectionate, not to say slobbering manner.

Old Merripebbles testified to his delight after his usual infantine fashion. He thrust his hands deeply into his trousers pocket, and danced round the visitors, stopping to shake hands profusely with Saumarez, till such time as Marston should be at liberty.

If the object of Saumarez in arranging the visit had been really what he had declared to Marston, he would soon have found the solution of his problem in the look of mingled pride and rapture with which Maud Carlton received our hero—which look was that of an Andromache welcoming a victorious Hector who belonged to her.

"You have come to spend the day with us?" Maud inquired.

"Certainly, if you will tolerate us," was the reply of—not Marston, but Don Sancho de Saumarez.

"Dear me! I am so delighted, or rather, I ought to say, honoured," said old Merripebbles. "Pray, my dear, let us have something extremely nice for dinner. You understand those things so much better than I do. Perhaps Mr. Saumarez and Mr. Marston—allow me to shake hands again, and assure you that I never was so much honoured in the whole course of my life—perhaps these gentlemen will assist you in ordering what is proper—though a mere beefsteak in such society—not that I wish it to be a beefsteak; on the contrary, turtle and champagne would be more in accordance with—I beg your pardon, dear."

The visitors remained to dinner, which did not consist of a beefsteak.

CHAPTER XXIV.

STRANGE WATERS, WITH BREAKERS A-HEAD.

NOTWITHSTANDING the excellent hotel dinner, the choice wines, the genial hospitality of his hostess, the splendid presence of Maud, and the improving conversation of Saumarez—to say nothing of the childish delight of old Merripebbles, in itself enough to send a Timon back to Athens—Marston had seldom passed a more uncomfortable day than that of his re-union with his kind old Longport friends after so long a separation.

He could scarcely analyse the feelings that disturbed him. The most prominent among them was that he was guilty of a deception. He felt that on entering the room he should have said at first, "My dear old friends, who have been like parents to me, I am married to Lucy Wareing, whom you know and love, and have come to ask your blessing for us both." But he had not said so—he had practically asserted by his behaviour that nothing of the kind had taken place. He was ashamed to confess the error. And as shame is the most intolerable of all sensations, he got rid of it as quickly as he could. Sophistry was at hand to help him as usual. Was he not serving his oldest and truest friend? Was not that proud descendant of the Hidalgos—with his sensitive heart torn

by love for a young capricious girl, who perhaps scorned him—an object of sympathy? “Of course,” Marston thought—that is, he pretended to think—“the idea of the girl’s being in love with me is preposterous, after the many opportunities she has had of enjoying the society of a man so infinitely my superior in rank, attainments, and all the rest of it.” In the process of drawing comparisons between himself and Saumarez (meaning them, of course, to be in favour of the latter), Marston found himself observing that his friend’s hair was getting rather thin on the forehead, and that there were undeniable prints of the crow’s foot on the corners of his friend’s brown eyelids. All the more reason, he thought, for humouring the poor fellow. I’m told love is like the measles—all the more serious when taken late in life. We must allow the poor patient to be a little capricious.

Highly satisfied with this rhetorical conclusion, our hero proceeded to try and feel comfortable. But Miss Carlton would not allow him to feel anything of the kind.

Increased years and power had not in the least degree weakened the leading article in that young lady’s creed—namely, that she had come on earth solely to do as she liked. She was now, to all intents and purposes, in the full enjoyment of her goodly fortune; for though barely eighteen, she had, by a species of *coup d’état*, declared herself of age in the most regal fashion. Her mother being her principal trustee (the other was an obscure relative in perpetual dread, for his life, of the wrath of Mrs. Merripebbles), the heiress found no difficulty in getting such sums of money as she required, and disposing of them as she thought fit. She thought fit to dispose of all in the furtherance of her one object in life—namely, that of qualifying herself to become the wife of Marston Lynch. Of that gentleman’s merit she had formed a doubtless exaggerated estimate. Being gifted with an ardent imagination, she had prophesied a most brilliant future for the man—or rather, the boy—she idolised, and thought that he would require a very superior sort of wife. She

had submitted, meekly, to be separated from him, bodily; that she might have time to bring herself nearer to him, mentally. Finding everybody around her worshipping her for her money, Miss Carlton, as will not unfrequently happen in such cases, felt the most withering contempt for that commodity—except as a means to a given end. If it had once struck her that Marston would have been happy with her—proud of her—and kind to her, with her money alone, she would have simply offered herself and it together, and taken no further trouble. But such a possibility never entered into her head. It would have been to degrade her phoenix to the level of the clumsy speculators, who, from time to time, insulted her understanding by business-like proposals of marriage, and whom she was never long in sending about their business, more or less civilly. It should be borne in mind that this young lady had never received a fashionable education. The honest uncertain old mother was not such a fool, or such a humbug, as to give her daughter a dog's-eared peerage by way of horn-book. Otherwise, Miss Carlton's decided character might have been so bent as to insist upon an alliance with a poor younger son of a noble family; and I dare say in this, as in most cases, her wishes might have been easily realised. I have no complaint to make as to this culpable omission in her rearing. Possibly it may account for her growing up in the belief that there was no more important person or class of persons in the world than herself. If so, let all mothers whose daughters are wealthy in their own right, take warning by the terrible example.

At any rate, immediately on leaving England, Miss Carlton had set resolutely to work to improve herself in every possible way. The fact of her loving Marston Lynch (as she certainly did very ardently), was in her mind sufficient proof of his being a very great personage, and worthy of any trouble or sacrifice. As she had very great talents (in fact, from the circumstance of some of her dearest friends pronouncing her a mad woman in after life, there is

reason to suppose she was something of a genius), she made rapid progress in all her studies. She had a splendid contralto voice, and Marston liked music. He must, therefore, have music of a very superior quality, without going from home for it. Maud was the terror and delight of the first Venetian and Neapolitan music masters; the terror, from her intolerable tantrums when they did not bring her on fast enough—the delight, on account of her marvellous quickness and thoroughly artistic nature (nor let us forget the lavishment of the gold pieces, when they made her satisfied with her own progress). Marston knew languages. Maud, to make up for her deficiencies in other matters, of which he was the sole acknowledged master, must know more than he. She was a fine French, Spanish, and Italian scholar within eighteen months (there was a little due to honest Miss Crooze for this, by-the-bye,) and, at the time of our renewing her acquaintance, was already deep in German, whereof Marston knew not a sentence. She studied history, poetry, and (especially) painting, with great ardour and success. In a word, from the sole impetus of her headstrong unquestioning love, she succeeded in making herself a very uncommon specimen of that *rara avis in terris*, a beautiful and accomplished lady.

And yet she was a perfect child—a spoilt one, of course. For you see she had not been trained to do all this for the sake of society—that is to say, to show off before a few thousand people for whom she did not care a pin, and who would naturally care much less for her. She had done it of her own account, for the sake of a man she had been so indelicate as to love. It stands to reason that she would be punished in the long run for such very unbecoming conduct. But it is not my business to anticipate.

At Genoa, in her eighteenth year, she had looked at herself in the glass, and rapidly reviewed her mental attainments. She declared herself a sufficiently near approach to perfection to return to England. She ordered her mother and step-father to hold themselves in readiness for a speedy departure. She would keep him waiting no longer.

“Upon my word, Maud,” said her mother; “Your conduct is the most indelicate.”

“You must not say that, mamma: anything but that, for it is wide of the truth.”

“But a young man who has never even proposed—”

“Whoever does propose to a girl of fourteen, except designing hucksters? Besides, he is poor, and would never propose to me.”

“James’s Church! Girl, are you going to propose to him?”

“If I see he loves me, as he must, I think” (Maud glanced at the mirror), “he will soon be able to see that I love him. I have never been taught to disguise my feelings, mamma. God bless you for that, the greatest good you have ever done me. There was no disguise of my love when I steered the boat, and threw the casks about to save his life. He cannot have forgotten that.”

“My child, that was three years ago.”

“I have loved him for more than three years.”

“But we have never heard from him.”

“No, thanks to your maternal precautions. But he has heard of me, as you know.”

“Through Don Sancho de Saumarez? My poor child, do you suppose a man, dying in love for you himself, would deliver messages to a rival?”

“So! A man whose addresses you yourself have encouraged you admit to be base enough to betray his friend. Thank you, mamma, for your own opinion of Don Sancho de Saumarez, which coincides with my own. We will talk no more on this subject if you please.”

The next day a stray London newspaper informed them that a new piece was in preparation at the Cork-street Theatre, which expected to create, &c. &c. The authorship was attributed to Mr. Marston Lynch of Longport, a young writer of great provincial celebrity, and already favourably known as a contributor to the metropolitan magazines. There were said to be good parts for Mrs. Swann, Mr. Dashwood, Mr. Muggins, &c. &c.

"I'm going to London, mamma," said Maud, "you may accompany me or not as you think fit."

Mrs. Merripebbles wept and scolded a good deal. She declaimed against stage plays and worldly vanities in general, and predicted a shameful end for her daughter. Then she suddenly remembered that Marston had promised to put her and old Elspeth the Scotch servant in the first play he ever wrote, and wondered whether he had ever kept his promise, and whether or not she should be able to recognise herself. She remembered certain salient points in the character of Elspeth which she feared the dramatist had overlooked, and regretted that she had not been at his elbow during the labours of composition. She was in high glee during the rest of the day, and performed prodigies of packing—occasionally resting in her labours to laugh at some long-forgotten facetiæ of Marston Lynch's—whom she declared she had always loved and admired (which was strictly true). She rated Old Merripebbles for standing with his hands in his pockets and smoking his filthy cigarettes (the sole dissipation with which our mild old friend had been contaminated in the very vortex of continental immorality)—instead of taking an interest in the welfare of a young man whose triumphs they were going to witness—and whom, if he had any feeling, he ought to regard as a son. Once in the course of the day she performed a few steps of the Highland Fling from memory, as she had once seen it executed in the back-kitchen at Ash Grove (by particular desire, and on that occasion only) by the sprightly Elspeth. She even committed herself at one period by embracing Maud rapturously—declaring that young lady to be her own true daughter and that she honoured her for fixing her choice upon a man of genius instead of consenting to pass her life among a set of clerks and stockjobbers. This was said in the presence of Merripebbles on purpose to humiliate that negotiant, who immediately felt very much ashamed of himself and his order.

Mrs. Merripebbles, after a hot supper—with some

Lachrymæ Christi—retired to rest very much fatigued, and groaning piteously. She wondered if she might be forgiven for having judged too harshly of the benighted Italian Catholics by whom she was surrounded. At least they had the grace to do penance for their sins.

Old Merripebbles was in suppressed extacies. He loved travelling. He loved London. He loved going to the play. He loved Marston Lynch with all his honest old heart, believing our hero to be the most gifted personage on the face of the earth. To be sure there was also Don Sancho de Saumarez, who was a gentleman of distinguished manners and great attainments. But then he was not so—so—well, he was not so young as Marston. You see, the old gentleman, who had the meanest opinion of himself, never felt himself so much at home as when among very young people. He felt that the young people appreciated him, and you may be sure they did. They laughed at him occasionally, and now and then played him very cruel tricks. But this was what the old boy liked above all things.

Everything had happened, as usual, in accordance with Miss Carlton's wishes. They had reached London just in time to witness the first performance of the *chef d'œuvre*. Maud had seen our hero—handsome, better grown, more manly than she had hoped—clamoured for and applauded by two thousand people. She believed him to be the greatest man in the world.

In the morning she had read his name in the newspapers—those wonderful mysterious newspapers!—discussed, as it seemed to her, with the same importance, as the kings and statesmen in the neighbouring columns. And here he was, fresh from his triumph—come to lay himself at her feet. And there she was, to raise him up, and press him to her heart.

It must not be supposed that Miss Carlton went through the latter interesting process literally, in the presence of her mamma, Mr. Merripebbles, and the stricken Sancho (whom she would rather had not made his appearance on

the occasion, but whom she felt sufficiently happy, and at peace with all men, to tolerate). Self-willed and impetuous as was this young lady, she was by no means deficient in real female delicacy, and proper respect for the *convénances*. But she made no disguise of her delight at seeing Marston again; of her admiration of his genius, his triumphs, and his presence. She told him frankly how they had come all the way from Genoa on purpose to see his play; how they had seen it, and how masterly a production it was; and finally, how she had felt sure that he would be the first to find them out in London, and hasten to see them.

"Not the first, my dear," said Mrs. Merripebbles.

"True," said Maud. "You were not up early enough for that, Sir. Mr. Tofts has been here. But Mr. Tofts has not the excuse for late rising, of having produced a play—which all London is going mad about—on the previous evening. Nor is Mr. Tofts at all likely to be confined to his bed owing to a fatigue of that description."

This was at an early stage of the visit. Marston began to feel hopeful.

"If Tofts has been here," he thought, "he must have told them of it. Well, it will be a comfort to make an end of this morbid ridiculous white lying business, which is not at all to my taste, and which, after all, cannot possibly serve Saumarez."

By "it" Marston had meant his marriage. It never occurred to him that Mr. Tofts (in company with a few more members of the human species) might possibly have escaped all knowledge of that most important event; or, having been apprised thereof, might be so rude as to forget all about it. You see, we all consider ourselves such very great people, and think all the world takes such an immense interest in us and our doings!

The sequel of the conversation suggested the humiliating probability that Tofts had not made the slightest allusion to our hero beyond a passing compliment on his success of the preceding evening.

"How that young man has got on, to be sure," said Mrs. Merripebbles. "Scarcely six-and-twenty, and already a large shipowner."

"Indeed!" said Marston, carelessly; "I thought he was a lawyer—or something of that kind."

"So he was; but he turned shipbroker, and without a penny of capital to begin life with, has played his cards so well that he is now the principal owner of the Carlton line of Quebec packets."

"The Carlton line?" Marston asked, awakened to a feeble interest in the doings of Tofts.

"Yes. And the principal ship, which he told us all about—horse-power, state-rooms, brass railings, and all the rest of it—is called 'The Maud.' Do you see anything significant in *that*, Mr. Marston?"

"Why—yes—I suppose it means something," Marston answered, as if he thought that no meaning whatsoever on the part of Tofts could be of very deep significance.

"He has just returned from Canada—a hasty visit—and expects to be called back again shortly to make a lengthened stay. It is my opinion he came to Europe with the intention of fetching somebody. And I think I know somebody, who, if she were not blind, might go back to Canada as Mrs. Tofts."

"Mamma," said Miss Carlton, quietly, "Do you know that you are talking very like a vulgar housemaid? Why not at once say that 'Tofts is willing,' or make some allusion to my keeping company with him. You could not place the question, which is one such as ought never to be publicly brought forward, in a more offensive light."

"This to me, you abandoned—wicked, impious girl."

"I must say, Maud," struck in the headstrong Merripebbles, "that such language as that to your mamma, in my presence—"

"Hold *your* tongue if you please, Mr. Merripebbles. You are ready enough to abandon your own children to the care of foreign schoolmasters and menials. Pray do not waste your superfluous paternal tyranny on my child

—who has no father to protect her, and who doesn't deserve one, or any other blessing."

Mrs. Merripebbles sobbed, and wished she was dead; and then turned dreadfully pale in terror of being taken at her word.

Old Merripebbles, who felt himself a very monster of heartlessness, and expected almost to be given into well merited custody for deserting his offspring (comfortably installed in English boarding-schools at Nice), stood quaking on the hearth-rug, ashamed to look his guests in the face.

Maud, with a frank assuring smile, held out her hand to him. The old gentleman bent over the snowy jewelled palm, which he was almost afraid to press with courtly gratitude. This approval from the Queen Regnant was quite enough for him. He was a happy man again.

"You must forgive me, mamma," said Maud. "If we have been offensive to each other we are surely quits on that score. But as you have brought the objectionable question forward, pray let us try and settle it. Do you wish me to marry Mr. Tofts—who, by the way, has not yet asked me—but supposing he had offered himself, would you wish me to accept him?"

"Who says I did?" inquired her mother, tartly.

"Would *you* wish me to marry Mr. Tofts, papa?"

Mr. Merripebbles broke out into an evident perspiration, and rubbed his thin locks about violently—

"Why, my dear young lady, I don't know—that is to say, I should consider it an honour myself——"

"Why?"

"Well, Mr. Tofts has got on so remarkably well."

"You mean he has made money? But that is precisely what I do not want. We have not a single taste in common. I do not love him, and we could never possibly be happy together. Why on earth—as I am fortunately placed above the necessity of sacrificing my happiness for the means of existence—should I marry a man who could at best only give me six horses instead of two?"

"Let her alone!—let her alone!" said Mrs. Merripebbles, who had just recovered her (ill) temper: "in a few minutes she'll out with it all. What a hurry she was in to come to England and all the rest of it. This is leap year, I believe, and nothing on earth would surprise me."

"Mother!" Miss Carlton rose from her seat angrily, her beautiful frame quivering all over.

"How were the vines looking when you left Piedmont, Mr. Merripebbles?" broke in Don Sancho, loudly, with a too evident wish to turn the conversation.

The look with which Miss Carlton favoured the speaker was decidedly not one of gratitude. She felt that the proceeding was coarsely indelicate. It was calling attention to an implication that should have been passed over.

Marston Lynch felt his cheeks flame.

Maud recovered her composure as well as she could, and talked to Marston about old times and old friends. She believed she had seen Miss Crooze in the stalls on the previous evening with some one remarkably like Mr. Howker. But Maud was a little near-sighted; and besides had been too much absorbed in the performance to verify the fact. And indeed it could not have been the lady and gentleman alluded to, or they would surely have found them out. Was Marston still at daggers drawn with his rich uncle, and had he heard anything lately of that darling little Lucy, whom the questioner had neglected shamefully for the last several months?

Marston's lip quivered. He was anxious to blurt out the whole truth. He looked imploringly to Saumarez, as begging absolution from his rashly given promise.

Saumarez had thought fit to assume the bearing of a wretched and despondent lover, to whom there is no hope left. He understood Marston's glance, and replied with a despairing toss of the head, which plainly expressed "Do as you like! Don't mind me. I am a poor devil not worth a thought!"

Marston felt extremely sorry for his friend. Besides, as one or two of my readers may know, when once you have

lent yourself to a lie, the process of redeeming yourself from a creditor of that description is remarkably humiliating. So he resolved to say nothing about his marriage on that evening, and exerted himself strenuously to put a very Damon to Don Sancho's Pythias.

After dinner (the cloth was laid at 3 P.M.: I hope the reader needs not to be told, at this late hour of the story that the Merripebbles was not a fashionable family) they had music: Maud awakened rare melodies on the old hotel piano, and sang songs of all nations in great variety. Amongst others Marston noticed one or two unpretending ballads which sounded strangely familiar to him, but which he could not at once recognise. He soon claimed them, however, as his own—early scraps of verse he had long thrown aside and forgotten. He was agreeably surprised to find them not utterly destitute of some kind of merit, and immensely flattered by the homage of their preservation by the young lady, who had adapted them all to appropriate airs either of her own composition or selection. But the flattery made him uncomfortable, and he felt he was accepting it under false pretences.

"All men are not equally fortunate," said Saumarez with a deplorable sigh. "I once sent Miss Carlton songs of my own composition. But they are deservedly forgotten."

"By no means. I remember your songs perfectly well. I will sing you as many of them as you like."

"Pray do! Let us have one of old Sancho's" said Marston, patronising his distinguished friend most affably.

"How would you like it? In your own very excellent English, or in the original French, Spanish, or Italian, as the case may be? I have all the versions."

Don Sancho bit his lips, and then laughed gaily.

"Ring the bell, Mr. Merripebbles, and order handcuffs for one. The thief is detected. Guilty of felonious translation attended with violence. But I am so hardened in my sin as not to feel ashamed of it. What would you have? I am not a man of genius. I love art and poetry, and like to contribute my mite to their treasures. *Voilà*

tout! Je ramasse mon bien où je le trouve. We are not all admitted to the innermost recesses of the temple. I see younger and more gifted men step in before me, and wish them God speed. But let me and other poor devils worship in peace, in the mud below the outer steps. If I can't be Endymion, let me sit out in the moonlight now and then."

Don Sancho concluded this remarkably fine apologue—in which the element of moonshine was appropriately conspicuous—in a voice tremulous with emotion (he had been pronounced the best *Romeo* on the American stage by the first New York papers). The whole assembly was touched; for it was obvious that, under the symbol of Art Worship, the speaker had intended to imply the hopelessness of his devotion to a more tangible goddess.

Marston felt extremely sorry for his friend and for Maud, and quite ashamed of his own excellences and attractions. If vanity and sham sentiment had not been so busily at work within him, it might have occurred to him that he would do very well to kick his dear friend down stairs for acting a most shameful and unworthy part; namely, in leading on a pure-minded young lady (whom he himself professed to love) to commit herself by an admission of preference for a married man.

The tears of Mrs. Merripebbles rose to the surface with their accustomed readiness. Old Merripebbles led the stricken hidalgo to a seat, gave him a bunch of grapes, and plied him with claret—just as he had been accustomed to solace his own beloved Tommy (aged seven) with cakes and halfpence when in trouble.

"I have one of your songs here which I have always liked," said Maud, with more kindness in her manner than she had yet shown to their elder visitor: "I will sing it you like."

Don Sancho bowed his head meekly.

Maud sang a really well written song—a little common place and "flashy" in sentiment and imagery, but faultless as to rhyme and measure. The singer threw such

deep feeling into her expression as to give the thing more importance than was its due.

"Beautiful!" said Marston. "Why, Saumarez, I couldn't write a song like that."

"Generosity in a conqueror is a double defeat," was the inflated answer.

At half-past six Maud declared that she was going to dress for the theatre.

"What theatre?"

"What theatre? Marston's theatre, of course. She intended going every night, till she had the new piece by heart."

Marston had not the least objection to go and see his own piece. Nor was he altogether sorry of the opportunity to show his friends what a great man he was—how he would bully the box-keepers, and so forth.

Stop: he had one objection, which perhaps ought to be considered *the* least objection. He had left a little lady all by herself in a lodging-house in Cecil-street, who would have given her ears——

"Pshaw! he said to himself. "She is not at all well. I kept her up too late last night: poor little darling, it would be a shame to spoil a second night's rest for her—in her present condition. Besides, there is my promise to Saumarez. And no doubt she has been up to her eyes in shopping with the money I left her, and must have fallen asleep over some grand 'cutting out' scheme. I will bring her to see Maud to-morrow, and explain all."

The friends went to the theatre all together.

When the performance was over, they exchanged farewells on the steps of the theatre. The two young men declined an invitation to return to sup at the hotel.

"We shall see you to-morrow?" said Maud, whose cordial manner towards Marston had materially cooled in the course of the day, and given place to one of anxious diffidence.

"Certainly," replied Marston, scarcely knowing what he said.

"Well, Saumarez, I hope you are satisfied," he asked of his friend, as they walked home alone. "I can tell you that this deception has been a source of great pain to me."

"Don't speak of it. What has it been to me? Satisfied? I am dissatisfied with myself and everything else. I believe I am half mad. I feel like an old drivelling dotard, though I am only thirty-four. Promise me one thing."

"Not a thing like the last, I hope."

"The same thing—let it stand over to-morrow. Don't go near them, if you like—but leave me to-morrow to myself. After that, do as you please. Confess the whole, and spare me as little as I deserve."

"But what excuse am I to offer?"

"I don't know. I don't know anything, leave me to-morrow to think if I can."

"You really pain me to see you in this state. Be it as you wish. Come home to supper—I dare say Lucy will be sitting up." (How was it Marston had thought she was in bed three hours ago?)

"No, I can't. I am no company for anybody. Besides—Pshaw! I must tell you I take a pleasure in humiliating myself. Do you know where I am going to finish the evening?"

"How can I tell?"

"Among the cabbages in Covent Garden Market, looking up at a light in the Bedford Hotel till it goes out. There, good night."

Don Sancho de Saumarez burst from his friend with a bitter laugh, and withdrew to a quiet game at billiards, with some friends in the Quadrant.

"Poor old fellow!" said Marston.

Of course Lucy was sitting up, and flew to the street door at her husband's well-known step. It was so good of him to come home so early and so well, and she had such a nice little supper waiting for him.

Did a chill come over Marston Lynch as he contrasted

the homely lodging-house parlour lighted by two dim candles, with the brilliant mirrored and lusted suite of rooms in which he had passed the day; the paltry supper of warmed-up meat and salad with the sumptuous banquet he had partaken of; the little cold, anxious, trembling figure that hung round him as if for warmth and life, with the magnificent self-possessed beauty who might have been his with all her wealth and charms? Did he look forward shudderingly into the inevitable, and contrast it hopelessly with the vanished possible.

For one moment perhaps. But if a man's weakness had led him to give way to such feelings, he had enough of a man's strength to combat them. He kissed his little wife heartily, and said he would never leave her for a day again. He stirred up the fire, and was astonished to find how comfortable the little place looked. Finally, he enjoyed a hearty supper of broiled bones and pickles, and cleared out the salad bowl. How thoroughly! Lucy enjoyed seeing him eat, I have no words to tell.

CHAPTER XXV.

A SHORT ONE—BUT FULL OF BUSINESS.

THE next day was to be a fête day with the happy Lucy. Marston was to spend the day with her. They were to dine at Richmond (if it had been at a baked potato-stall, Lucy would have been equally pleased in such company), and go to see the piece in the evening.

Marston went out early in the morning to change Mr. Toplin's cheque. He had never had so much money in his possession before. He took a cab, of course, though he had nowhere particular to go to, and stopped the vehicle at various jewellers and dealers in finery—from whom he made costly purchases—a great many for himself, but far more for Lucy.

He discharged the driver at the top of Cecil-street, and walked.

Towards his own home? No. Towards Covent Garden.

He had not the slightest intention of calling at the Bedford, of course. But Lucy liked flowers, and he was determined to take her home the most splendid bouquet that money could purchase.

He bought his bouquet, and met old Merripebbles dissipating in a pennyworth of apples.

"Come up," said the old boy, "you'll find them all at home."

Marston attempted an apology, he had promised his—
He was nearly letting the cat out of the bag—he had

promised his manager to meet him at the theatre about a new piece.

"They'll be delighted to hear all about it, and I dare say won't press you to stop—and a little Hock and soda water—"

The wicked old rascal! Where had he learned such drinks?

Well, Marston would just step up and pay his respects to the ladies.

He found them in the society of Don Sancho de Saumarez, who looked pale and interesting. His moustachios were remarkably black this morning, and the colour contrasted admirably with his "Wertherfaced" complexion.

"Another bouquet, Maud," cried Mrs. Merripebbles, "you won't refuse this one?"

"Not if it is intended for me, certainly," said Maud, calmly.

What could Marston do but offer her the bouquet—saying that he had just purchased it with the intention of—leaving it for her. He was pressed for time, but would she accept it as the gift of an old and sincere friend?

"As the gift of an old and sincere friend, certainly," said Maud, with some sadness in her voice and countenance as she took the flowers.

"But whose was the rejected bouquet?" Marston inquired, gaily. "Not yours, old fellow, I hope. You deserve better treatment.

"No," said Saumarez, bitterly, "I have long left off bringing them. My offerings are never accepted. I am an eel who is used to skinning. The last victim of my species, who has just wriggled out of the apartment in a most wretched condition, is Tofts."

"*Toujours*, Tofts?"

"Yes," Mrs. Merripebbles interposed, "he has to start for Canada to-morrow, and came this morning with a formal proposal of marriage. Nothing could be more delicate or flattering than the way in which he declared himself?"

"He could not have offered to buy a ship, a cargo and

all, in a more thoroughly business-like and straightforward manner," said Maud, contemptuously.

"Now, Maud, be quiet, we have agreed not to quarrel to-day, and, after my promise to accede to all your wishes, it is really too bad of you. You may guess what answer he received, Mr. Marston."

"I hope he was sent about his business to give place to a better man," said Marston, warmly glancing at his friend.

"Something of that, perhaps," said the mother. "We are all friends here, I hope; even you, Mr. Saumarez, I believe, have my dear child's interest at heart? Marston, I will trifle with her and with you no longer. Mr. Tofts, in answer to a question that he put, was informed that my daughter's affections were elsewhere disposed of."

"Silence, Mother," said Maud, quivering with shame and a thousand other emotions: "this is wrong. This is not the place. Spare me!"

She was about to hurry from the room.

"Stay, Maud!" Marston cried. "This has gone too far. My dear friends, I have been to blame. But hear me?"

"Marston Lynch!" cried Don Sancho, in a loud voice, leaping from his seat, "You are under a promise to me."

"I know it."

"I claim its fulfilment. Leave the house with me. I must speak to you alone."

And he hurried the wondering Marston out of the apartment, and into the Covent Garden Piazzas, leaving the family trio aghast with astonishment.

"Now, Saumarez, what is the meaning of this tomfoolery?"

"Tomfoolery! Idiocy! Madness! Padded rooms! Handcuffs and whips, that is the meaning of it, I suppose. If I had let you speak the truth it would have blasted me in her opinion for ever and ever."

"But the truth must come out."

"Out with it, then, and ruin me. Destroy my last chance. Let her despise me—and get it over. But you promised me till to-morrow."

"What matters a day?"

"Everything. You can coin an excuse—a lie. I have known men do more than that to serve a friend—or, at least, you can give me time to play my last card; and, if that fails, to escape over the seas. I tell you, man, I only hoped for this day's enjoyment of her society—and then—then—— But what is that to you? But, go back and tell them all. You cannot place my conduct—into which my blind passion has hurried me—in a blacker light than I shall place it when all is over. There, go."

"I shall not again visit our friends, Saumarez, till I take my wife to see them." Marston answered quickly. "I will keep my word with you, and my motives for concealing my marriage shall remain a mystery, let them think what they will. I think that your most honest plan would be to return to them yourself, and save me the trouble of a confession."

"And confess myself a pitiful, plotting dastard—as I have been? I should still like to have a hope to cling to. But, enough. God bless you, my boy. You have behaved nobly. We may never meet again."

Don Sancho walked hurriedly away, brushing his eyelids with the back of his buckskin gloves.

"I hope he won't do himself any harm," thought Marston, looking after the retreating figure of his friend. "He's as mad as a March hare."

In case any uneasiness should be felt on the score of Don Sancho de Saumarez, it must be stated here that he did himself no harm whatever, beyond such as may have accrued from the inhalation of a choice Havannah cigar, which he smoked enjoyingly in Kilpack's Divan, seated on the counter, against which he drummed his patent leather heels with the greatest satisfaction for the space of half-an-hour.

The clock of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, sounded the

hour of noon. Marston was overdue at Cecil-street. He bought a second bouquet—handsomer than the first—and went home to fetch his wife in a cab.

They dined at the Star and Garter—would I had time and space to describe the innocent joys of that dinner. Marston was absent, and pre-occupied it is true—but then, what weighty undertakings had he not on his mind? Nevertheless, he was all kindness and devotion to Lucy. He told her of his future literary schemes—how many plays he intended writing within the next six months—and how he would naturally raise his scale of prices, in proportion to each success. Lucy thought the dinner a little too costly, it is true; but then, what was good enough for such a man as her husband?

In the evening they returned to town by rail, and drove in state to the Cork Street theatre.

Then Lucy was in her glory. The servants of the theatre recognised her husband, and treated him with submission. Great men, great authors, critics, and what not, came up to them with compliments and congratulations, and all seemed proud of an introduction to the pretty modest little wife of the successful author. Even the great Toplin himself, retreating into the body of the house for breathing time, after a terrible engagement with his arch enemies of the free list, was fain to stop and shake hands with his young friend, to whom he said (with his most courtly bow to the pretty little wife)—

“Lucky dog! Lucky dog! Carry all away before you, everywhere. I see Thursday night was not your first brilliant success by any means. Glad I’ve seen you, Mrs. Lynch—always delighted to find my authors are men of taste. Thought well of him last night, but feel sure of him now.”

“What a nice gentleman!” said Lucy, as Toplin, after a “more exquisite bow than the other,” returned to the attack at the free barrier list.

They were shown into a private box, “Mr. Lynch’s box,” as the entire house was audibly informed, to the

great delight of Lucy. And then to have Mr. Lynch by her side, and to know that all those people were assembled to listen to Mr. Lynch's play!

The first act of Mr. Lynch's play proceeded without interruption. Lucy anticipating each word as spoken by the actors—occasionally getting a little pettish when they went wrong. She had copied out the manuscript herself in a beautiful school hand, and knew it by heart.

When the first act was over, Lucy, by the dignity of her position as the author's wife, felt emboldened to glance round the house.

"Good heavens, Marston! who is that beautiful girl staring at us from the opposite box. I know the face—it must be—Marston, it is Maud Carlton?"

The reader will conceive that Marston was inexpressibly delighted by the discovery.

"It is Maud. There is Mr. Merripebbles with her, and behind him—why it is your friend Saumarez, Marston."

Marston was delighted, of course.

"She has seen me. She has left the box. She is coming round to us. How beautiful she has grown."

In a few seconds the rustle of brocade was heard outside the box-door. A tap followed. Marston opened the door, and Lucy and Maud were in each other's arms.

"You darling little Lucy! I should have known you anywhere, you are not a bit altered, except just a little prettier. When did you come to London? To-day, of course, or Marston would have told us. I am jealous of him already, for having picked you up before me."

"Marston, did you know that Maud was in London?"

"My dear—Maud—Miss Carlton—I would have explained this morning, had it not been for"—

Don Sancho looked in at the box-door with a Mesphitophilean grin, (he had adapted *Faust* to the English stage himself, and his performance of the Demon had been highly applauded in Baltimore and Boston.)

"What is the meaning of this?" said Maud, clutching

at Lucy's left hand, on which her quick eye had detected the wedding-ring.

"Have you seen her, Marston, and not told her?"

"It is not my fault, so help me heaven, Maud. Lucy is my wife; we have been married four months. I would have brought her to see you to-morrow."

Miss Carlton stood rigidly for a few moments, like one in a fit of catalepsy. Her cheeks were colourless, her lips blue. Then she turned slowly round and walked out of the box. They could hear her heavy-measured steps in the box lobby when the curtain had drawn up for the second act.

Don Sancho de Saumarez followed the young lady.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DON SANCHO MAKES LOVE AFTER AN ECCENTRIC
FASHION.

IT is most likely that Miss Carlton in full evening dress, as she was, would have marched from the box-lobby into Cork-street—right among the cabmen and orange-women—had it not been for the intervention of the check-taker's barrier. There she was brought to a standstill, and stood gazing with sullen wildness down the entrance of the theatre. If the little iron railing before her had belonged to a bridge—with dark deep gurgling water on the other side of it, instead of a lighted hall thronged with lackeys and idlers—there is little reason to doubt that the young lady would have jumped over it. A civil official, (such things do exist here and there, even in theatres) noticing her agitated condition, and knowing it was no fit place for a young lady, as he could see she was, to stand alone in, asked her, as a hint, if she was waiting for her carriage. She waved her hand mechanically, and said, "get me one." A cab was called, and Maud leaped into it, with a contemptuous disregard of such dependencies as cloak, fan, opera-glass, stepfather, &c., which she had left behind her in the box, and told the man to drive the Bedford Hotel.

Don Sancho got in a cab immediately after her. It is possible that Maud's driver, with the acute perceptions of his order, divined that he had got hold of an inexperienced fare, and went a mile or so out of his way, with a view to earning an honest shilling for his struggling wife

and family. It is also likely that Don Sancho's driver, by a similar mental process, made up his mind that *his* fare was one with whom no such liberties might be taken; or, perhaps, the descendant of the hidalgos—(by the way, "hidalgo" means *somebody's son*: clearly our friend was an hidalgo)—with his usual seeking after effect—even with no better audience than a cabman—had done a little retail Monte Christo business on the way, and encouraged the man to speed by rare munificence. At any rate, when Maud entered the sitting-room of the hotel, to be alone for a little while—(her mother, she knew, had retired to bed early, being unwell)—to try and tame her maddening, writhing thoughts into something like order,—there was Don Sancho seated at a table, in an unexceptionable attitude, with the lamp so disposed as to set off his interesting face and figure to the best advantage.

Maud started with a feeling of something like terror. For a moment she thought this man must possess some supernatural power. It seemed to her, she had left him a few seconds ago miles away, such had been the hurry and pre-occupation of her thoughts; and here he was before her as if by magic, perfectly calm and collected. She was really and truly afraid of him.

Nothing could have pleased Don Sancho de Saumarez better. In fact, he had "led up to" the situation, and he was an experienced dramatist and stage-manager, as we have learnt.

"I believe you are a devil," said Miss Carlton, in a voice wherein hatred certainly had the best of it over fear.

Don Sancho was immensely flattered. You could not have paid him a compliment more to his taste. He put on his coldest smile, and elevated the extremities of his thin black eyebrows to their utmost Mephistophelean pitch.

"Why have you come here?"

"To seize an opportunity," said the actor, calmly.

"Of humiliating me? Have you not had sufficient? But no! You must reap the fruits of your labours."

"I hope so in time. They have been long and arduous enough."

Maud sat down heavily, and pressed her hand against her burning brow, tossing her lovely forest of ringlets about in splendid disorder.

"You have done this," she resumed, looking up fiercely. "I cannot tell you what, nor how. But I feel that I owe you this worse than death and shame that has come upon me. You have weighed upon my life like an evil destiny ever since I have known you."

The Brummagem O. Smith could scarcely contain his satisfaction.

"Why have you done this?" Maud asked, almost imploringly. "Now that you have triumphed, you cannot refuse to tell me. I am curious to know what motive you could have for pursuing me with such malignity."

"What have I done, Maud?" Saumarez inquired in a sweet voice, suddenly changing to an expression of naïve simplicity.

The question was certainly a trying one. What had he done? Maud could not answer him; and yet her woman's instinct told her that he had done all.

"Was it my fault, Maud?" (He had never called her Maud till this evening; she winced at the familiarity as an evidence that he was gaining an ascendancy over her.)

"Was it my fault, Maud, that you fixed your affections on Marston Lynch?"

"How dare you——?" she began fiercely.

"Surely, I may allude to what you have never yourself striven to conceal, as I know to my misery. Was it my fault that he should be ass and dolt enough to fix his affections on another less worthy than yourself? You complimented me just now with an ironical suspicion of demoniac power. I confess if I had possessed such a gift I might have exerted it to bring about such a result as has happened without my interference. But being only a simple mortal I do not possess the secret of love philtres. Would to God I did! Would to God I did!"

Don Sancho repeated this with an excellent imitation of heartfelt anguish, burying his face in his hands, and rocking to and fro on his chair.

His manner calmed, if not softened her, a little.

"Then why was this concealment, if not to make me an object of scorn to myself and others?"

"What concealment?"

The question was asked in a bland tone of astonishment.

"You know what I mean, but you are here to pain and exult over me. Well! as you say, I have made no concealment of my feelings, even to you, whom I know to be one mass of duplicity. I mean, Marston Lynch's marriage. His marriage! Oh, God, in Heaven!"

"And do you think this is a triumph to me, Maud Carlton, to hear my rival—even now that he is lost—lamented over with a passion that removes me further from hope than ever? Can I enter into Marston Lynch's secret thoughts? Can I tell you his motive for concealing his marriage?"

"You knew of it."

"Maud Carlton, I did not."

Don Sancho leapt to his feet indignantly as he spoke. He really managed to bring a flush into his pale cheeks, and looked a noble picture of outraged virtue.

Don Sancho de Saumarez had studied the theory of Lying as assiduously as he had cultivated its practice. It was one of his maxims that lies are like bullets, the biggest do the surest service.

Maud was baffled but not convinced.

"Why are you here now?" she asked sullenly.

"Why am I ever here? Why is it that I cannot keep myself away in spite of scorn and insult? But let that pass. I followed you, Maud, to protect you,"

"From whom, pray?"

"From yourself, probably. When you left the theatre, I could have wished myself a demon indeed. Would you know why?"

Maud tossed her head.

"Because a demon possessed you."

Don Sancho was highly pleased with this epigram; and made a mental note of it for his next dramatic adaptation from the French.

"You are right," said Maud, strongly excited. "I was—I am possessed of a demon. The little miserable pale-faced doll! I left her in mercy, or I should have wrenched her puny hand off. Fool, dolt, idiot, as he is. There must be love-spells or philtres in the world, or he could never have preferred such a baby to me. To me!" Miss Carlton drew herself up to her full height, and surveyed herself angrily in a mirror. Don Sancho admired her very much indeed, and persuaded himself for the moment that he was dying in love for her.

"He did not know you, Maud. Thank Heaven!"

"Why?"

"Because had he known you in time, he would have won you from me. He is my superior in every way," (Don Sancho knew the value of a little humility): "I should have given up all hope."

"Do so now—once and for ever."

"No, by Heavens! I will win you yet."

"You think so."

"I do—I will. Your love for him is at an end. It will soon change to hate. He has slighted you, and you can never forgive him. You will hate him the more when you see him prosperous and happy with another—insulting you with their very happiness. You cannot live without love, Maud. In time you will have tested the value of mine—and will accept it."

Maud seemed not to heed the last part of his speech. She sat biting her lip, beating her pretty foot against the carpet, and repeating, "Happy—prosperous!—Happy—prosperous!—and with her."

Then she wheeled round on her chair, and addressing her visitor in a choking voice, commenced—

"Saumarez, I believe I could almost love you, if——"

She paused

"If there is a condition, name it."

Maud laughed.

"I meant to say if instead of a scheming trickster, you were a bold villain."

"I am neither, Maud; but proceed."

Maud laughed again. A cracked, jarring, unpleasant laugh it was—so different to her usual silvery tones.

"I was going to give a bit of bombast in your own style—and to say that if you could show me them both dead, with knives in their hearts, and tell me it was your work, I would pay you like a bold bravo, with a handsome price—and marry you. There—leave me. You have taken me at an unkind advantage. Why, man, you are a pitiful coward to pry into a poor girl's weaknesses, and listen to her ravings. Good night."

Don Sancho rose and took her hand. She tried to release it, but the effort seemed hardly worth the making. She left it there.

"Maud Carlton," said Saumarez, fixing his eyes upon her, and speaking in measured tones. "I know you better than you think. You have been grievously outraged—not intentionally, perhaps—but the thing is done. You spoke just now, lightly, of a terrible revenge. Revenge on such a scale is, of course, out of the question. But revenge of some kind you must and will have. I can give it you."

"By marrying me? Frankly, I should consider it no great triumph."

"I have it in my power to make Marston Lynch a rich man."

"So had I. How will that serve me?"

"Read this."

Don Sancho produced a document from his breast pocket, and held it open, without relinquishing it, for Maud to read. It was no other than our old acquaintance the will, which had exercised such an influence on the nerves and cheque book of Mr. Gregory Lynch.

"I cannot read to-night, my head is swimming. What is the meaning of this?"

"A will, which, if once made public, makes Marston Lynch a freehold proprietor, and his wife a rich man's lady, surrounded by every luxury and honour,—richer than yourself, Maud."

"Give it to me."

Miss Carlton clutched at the document spitefully. Don Sancho retained his possession of it.

"Not yet, at any rate. Hear a few words that may give you some idea of the lengths my passion for you has led me. This will came into my possession—no matter how—some time back. It brought me to England that I might do justice to Marston Lynch, who is entitled by this, his grandfather's will, to a great portion of his uncle's property. Two years ago I had completed the chain of evidence necessary to establish its validity. Marston was on the eve of becoming wealthy, when——"

"What?"

"When I discovered that you loved him. He was more than my match already. I was not going to put the additional weapons in his hands of riches and power. Marston Lynch was my friend: but if my brother stood in my way, in love, I would remove him."

"I do not understand you."

"You shall. I am a selfish man, and, where my own interest and passions are concerned, an unscrupulous one. I have concealed this will to further my own interests with you, by retarding those of my rival. Promise me some hope, and it shall never see light."

"Would you commit a robbery?"

"You were only half in bitter jest, awhile ago, when you proposed that I should commit two murders. Yes, Maud, I could become either a scheming trickster or a bold villain to win you. It depends on a word from you whether Marston Lynch is to become a rich man or a starving beggar. Continue to treat me as you have done, and I have no longer any motive for continuing a crime."

Marston and his wife shall be happy, if I cannot be so."

He had held the will temptingly open, and Maud had spelt it line by line. She was nearly mad. All the worst passions of her ardent nature had been aroused by the sorely trying events of the evening. She was as vindictive as she was loving. Remember that her fine glowing nature was as a rank uncultivated garden, with scarcely a weed eradicated; beautiful as were its flowers, rich as were many of its fruits. She had lived for a dream which had been cruelly dissipated. She hated Lucy Lynch from the bottom of her heart. Her quick imagination had divined, that with herself, backed by the magic of her wealth, Marston Lynch would have been a happy honoured man—would have had the means to develope his character and realise his ambitions: whereas, with a timid, helpless partner like Lucy, his career would be trammelled and his life eventually embittered. At first she thought her anger towards the poor little wife was disinterested, on Marston's account. What right had the designing little schemer to spread her toils to clog a great man's steps for her own selfish gratification? She (Maud) would have helped, supported him, with her strength and wealth, and, above all, her love, which was as great as herself. But when she saw before her the written evidence of a possibility that Marston and Lucy might be happy together—independent of her, her wealth, or her revenge—she was bound to recognise the ravaging power of base selfish jealousy. She would rather see them both dead than happy with each other.

"Give it to me," she said, clutching at the will again.

"Unconditionally, Maud?"

"I do not know. I cannot tell its value; but I cannot bear the thought that he should see her happy and smiling; he would grow to love her. She is beautiful after all—above all, when she is happy. The madman! I would have loved him through everything. I would love him now if he would leave her. What are their laws to me?"

I would sing ballads in the streets for him. I would drudge, slave, suffer, steal for him. My God, what love the fool has lost !”

The artistic sense of Saumarez—if nothing higher—was thoroughly roused. He admired the strong, agonised, untutored, lawless girl more than ever. If he had been an honest man he would have obeyed a momentary impulse to speak half-a-dozen words, that might have placed the poor shaken spoilt child in the way of peace, if not to happiness. But, alack ! he was thirty-four years of age, and an artificial rogue of some twenty years’ induration. He had prepared a very pretty plot, which it would be a thousand pities to spoil.

“Here is the will, Maud,” he said, folding up the document and handing it to her.

She took it eagerly at first, and then seemed terrified at its possession.

“What am I to do with it ?”

“What you please. Bring me to the hulks with it, if you like ; only remember it was done for your sake. I have only one condition to make.

“What is that ?”

“That you do not destroy it till we are married.”

“Take it back, then.”

“If I do, it will only be to give it to Marston and confess all. I am sick of this course, if no reward is to come of it. Shall I take it ?”

“No—no ; I must see them ruined—beggars—starving beggars.”

“You shall. I will do any good or evil you may command me, Maud, only make yourself the price. After all, why should I affect to love Marston Lynch ? I hate him. I have hated him ever since he has crossed my path. I have power to injure him beyond what you hold in your hand. If I can punish him for his insolent slights to you ; if I can show him to you, with his pet wax doll, ruined, broken, and miserable, loathing and detesting each other—”

“Show me that, and take all I have.”

Miss Carlton had grown very ugly within the last few minutes.

"You make me out a very common trickster indeed. If I chose to scheme for money, I have brains enough to do it, on a larger scale than you have any conception of. I want you, Maud, not your money."

"Then take me, with or without it," said Maud, with a contemptuous toss of her beautiful body, as though she were throwing that precious creation away as a thing no longer of any value.

Mr. Merripebbles, scared and breathless, entered the apartment. Maud, at a sign from Saumarez, concealed the will in her bosom. She immediately repented of having done so; but it was too late to retract.

"Dear, dear!" said old Merripebbles, intensely fluttered. "What is the meaning of all this? Maud, I waited in the box half an hour for you. Then I went over to Mr. Marston's box, and he quite confused me with explanations about something or other. To think of his being married to little Lucy, all the time, and—Mr. Saumarez you are not going, surely?"

"I am sorry I am compelled to, Sir. Miss Carlton—perhaps I may be allowed to say Maud—to-night was indisposed. I hope to be received for the future on a more intimate footing."

What could Maud say?

"Good night," that was all.

Mr. Saumarez appeared to receive this parting salutation with rapture, and held the speaker's hand much longer than was intended, bidding the aforesaid speaker be composed, with an assurance that he would look round the first thing in the morning. As Mr. Merripebbles showed him to the door, Don Sancho pressed the old stockbroker's hand very warmly, whispering in that gentleman's ear a comforting assurance that he believed he had made it all right at last.

"I am sure I am very much honoured and delighted," said the old boy, with a not very delighted face—"but,"

he added to himself, when the visitor had departed, "I had hoped it was to be Mr. Marston; though, of course, that is out of the question."

Don Sancho de Saumarez sped along the Covent Garden Piazzas (bound for the Quadrant) at a brisk lively pace, that threatened to break into a dance, musing as follows:—

"So! I have made her an accomplice in what she believes to be a criminal transaction; and have promised to bring Marston Lynch to ruin. Poor old Marston! I'm sure I shan't take any trouble in the matter. I shall just leave him to himself—he'll do it fast enough, without my assistance—and shall claim credit for the consequence. She's a splendid young virago, and it will have a glorious effect when it gets wind that she's going to marry me."

Don Sancho de Saumarez surpassed himself at billiards that evening.

CHAPTER XXVII,

MARSTON MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE OF SEVERAL
DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC CHARACTERS—ONE ESPE-
CIALLY.

ON the following morning Marston and Lucy left their lodgings early, *en route* for the Bedford Hotel, to call on their old friends, and soothe the irritated Maud if possible. Our unfortunate hero felt himself in a position which, had it not been so acutely painful, would have been excessively ridiculous. He was willing himself to explain everything. But what was there he really could explain; and who was likely to ask for an explanation? He could not go and apologise to Miss Carlton for having first inspired that volcanic young lady with a tender passion, and subsequently married somebody else. Should he keep away altogether and let the scrape right itself? His ingenuous and candid nature revolted at the idea. He would face his old benefactors; and, if they should have any reproaches to make, would endeavour to bear or meet them. After all, perhaps he was exaggerating the whole difficulty. Maud had been wayward and rude to Lucy at the theatre. What of that? Maud had always been wayward, and rudeness was no novel phrase in her behaviour. He decided that he would take his wife to her old friends, and ignore everything, but a want of candour on his part in concealing his marriage from people to whom his welfare was dear, for which con-

cealment, temporarily, he would say there was a special reason. What reason? To this inquiry he would only answer himself with a hearty mental curse at his dear friend Saumarez, and a recognition of increased perplexity.

As to Lucy, she was in a state of intense bewilderment at the whole affair. What motive could Marston have for concealing from her his knowledge of the family being in London, and his frequent visits to them, any more than, on the other hand, for keeping his marriage a secret from them? Lucy had not a spark of jealousy in her composition. Nor had she as yet learned to believe in the possibility of her idolized husband being induced—for any earthly consideration—to act disingenuously or unwisely. Marston could only explain to her that he had acted on an unconditional promise given to Saumarez. Lucy strove to admire this scrupulous adherence to an engagement, however extracted, and succeeded in discovering therein something like magnanimity. But from that time forth she conceived an instinctive aversion to Don Sancho, to which she adhered ever after with true feminine tenacity.

They reached the hotel, and sent up their cards to the heads of the family,

In a short time the servant returned, with the embarrassed countenance of one charged with an ungracious message. Mrs. Merripebbles and Miss Carlton respectfully declined receiving the visitors.

Mr. and Mrs. Lynch walked back to Cecil-street—silent and unhappy.

In the course of the day, Marston, at Lucy's suggestion, wrote to Mrs. Merripebbles, expressing, in warm terms, his gratitude, and that of his wife, for the many kindnesses received from the stockbroker's family, with his regret that any misunderstanding should have shut them out from so dear a circle. He briefly said that he had been bound in honour to keep the change in his condition a secret, for a certain time, for a reason he was not even then at liberty to make public, but which, in justice to himself,

he would declare to Mrs. Merripebbles personally, if she would favour him with an interview.

In a few hours the letter was returned with the seal unbroken.

"Who could have told them your address?" asked the suspicious Lucy.

"Who? Why, anybody. There can be no difficulty in finding out where I live," replied the popular author, conceitedly.

"There is only one person who could have told them," Mrs. Lynch persisted.

"You mean Saumarez? Suppose he did? If they asked him my address, of course he would give it. My dear, I don't like to see you so suspicious. You see treachery in everything."

"From that quarter I do."

Don Sancho de Saumarez never visited Marston Lynch again at the residence of the latter, who rather gave his wife to understand that he had cut the Mexican's acquaintance, in obedience to her repeated urging. But, after a slight coolness, the two gentlemen soon began to meet in green-rooms, coffee-rooms, and at the chamber of their mutual bachelor acquaintances, on much of their former footing. On one occasion, after a somewhat lively supper, when Marston was in rather a sentimental condition, Saumarez melted the last icicle by seizing his young friend rapturously by the hand, and exclaiming, in a passionate whisper—

"Marston; I can't bear this. You have sacrificed yourself most nobly for me. You have saved me more than life. I have hopes now—which, if you had divulged my unworthiness, would have been destroyed for ever. All shall be explained and atoned for. Only say we are friends."

"My dear fellow——"

The remainder of the scene was tearful and incoherent. Marston did not mention this formal reconciliation to his

wife. Women were so prejudiced. Saumarez was a good fellow after all. Besides, as they must be thrown constantly together in the way of business, what folly to keep up the semblance of a feud between them !

Marston Lynch was at work upon a new comedy—in five acts, if you please—about which he talked a great deal more than was necessary, but with which he made no great progress. This he attributed to various causes—too much company—other literary engagements—laziness, &c., &c., all of which obstructions he perennially resolved to remove on the following Monday, and attack the *magnum opus* in earnest.

The secret was, our hero had set himself a task beyond his present powers, and was afraid of it. He was in the perilous position of a young man depending upon literature for his existence who had been precociously successful. In such cases, the entire journey seems as easy as the first step. At the second, or third, the ground usually becomes hilly. Marston, at this time, had not had sufficient experience of art or nature to carry him through the ambitious project he had formed ; and good natured friends, jealous of his early success, already began to inquire with sneering impatience for the promised *chef d'œuvre*.

Altogether, though, Marston found no lack of employment, and that, as long as it lasted, lucrative enough in its way. He had a ready pen, and his name being well before the public, found no difficulty in obtaining access to the periodicals, then a more profitable vein to work than at present. On one especially—of which more hereafter—he became a person of some importance. Various desultory commissions, moreover, were offered him frequently enough for literary work, very little to his taste. Some of his proposed engagements were queer enough, as the following specimen will testify :—

One morning, as Marston was writing, the servant brought him a card. Mr. Marston looked at it.

“Mr. Tipton—who the deuce is Mr. Tipton?” he

asked himself. "I know no one of the name but the man who sings comic songs, of a questionable description, at the Supper Taverns."

The visitor, on being shown in, turned out to be the popular vocalist himself.

He was a quaint, vulgar-looking, good-humoured fellow, dressed in an expensive caricature of the prevailing fashion. He was not alone: and his companion excited no little surprise in our hero. This was a graceful delicate little girl, of some five years old, splendidly and tastefully dressed, whom the comic singer seemed to treat with great tenderness.

"How do you do, sir?" said Mr. Tipton, shaking hands with our hero with much cordiality, and helping himself to a seat with the little girl on his knee. "No occasion for introduction between us, eh? Public characters ought to know each other. Birds of a feather you know."

Marston having resisted a momentary temptation to kick his visitor out of the room, laughed heartily, and asked in what way he might have the pleasure of serving Mr. Tipton.

"Ah! that's my style—business first, pleasure afterwards. We shall get on I see. Now, I want you to write me a song."

"Indeed!" Marston turned slightly red, and was about to add, "and what the devil is that to me." But it was evident, from the man's manner, he had no idea he was conferring anything but the highest honour, in the offer of his patronage.

"Yes, something spicy. Run, and look out of window, my love," said he to the little girl, who obeyed him. "Something in the style of my ——"

And, with a vulgar wink, he named a song, of which Marston remembered to have heard the commencement only, having been driven out of the room by its atrocious character.

He arose from his chair with offended dignity.

"You have applied to the wrong person, sir."

"Not a bit," Mr. Tipton interrupted pleasantly. "Don't make a mistake. Money's no object to me for a taking article. Name your own price—and the money down when it is finished. Say ten pounds—twenty, if you like—and I'll give you a cheque for half in advance."

Mr. Tipton had no idea that an author could feel any but pecuniary scruples at writing in his peculiar school of composition.

Marston saw it was useless being angry with the man. He merely said his time was too much occupied now to undertake any new engagements.

"Then, take your own time. Choose your own subject—for you're the man for *my* money. Mind, half in advance, whenever you like to begin."

"We'll see about it. I am rather pressed for time just now. Good morning."

"Good bye. I know how you literary swells are occupied. Come along, my pet. Mind, pile it up as strong as you please: in your raciest style."

"That's a sweet little girl of your's, Mr. Tipton," Marston said, anxious to evade the disagreeable subject.

"Yes, sir, she is," said the vocalist, parting the child's hair, and kissing her on the forehead; "she's rather a good 'un—and she's to be a lady—she is."

"Is she your only one?"

"Yes, sir, the only one," said the man huskily; "and not mine, sir. She's my sister's child—my sister's child."

"Have you no children of your own?"

"Four—all dead, sir; and the mother—and my sister, *her* mother, attending of 'em. That was in the bad time, that was—before I got my present high position. No jellies, and game, and broth, and the best advice in them days, sir."

The singer looked up with a queer, rueful gasp, and resumed his burden of "But she's to be a lady, a real lady, she is; and shall have all that money can buy her."

"Do you send her to a good school?"

"School! No, sir. Not yet. It will have to come

to that, some day ; but I can't bring my mind to it yet. She has first-rate masters in the day-time ; but I can't let her go away from me as yet, day or night."

" Good heavens ! Why, you don't take her to that abominable singing-place with you, surely ? "

" Every night, sir ; and she's put to bed in Mrs. Higson's room, as soon as I get there, in a cot fit for a queen. Why, you don't suppose I'd let her hear a word of the rough talk that goes on in the concert-room ? "

" Well, I should hope not. "

" *I* should hope not. Not a rough word shall ever come near her ears. But I'm detaining you, sir. Jump up, pet—pick-a-back ! Never mind the door, sir ; and don't forget, whenever you're ready. The money's as safe as the Bank. Sir, to you. Gee-up ! "

Mr. Tipton cantered up Cecil-street, with the child on his back, shouting joyously, and flogging him with the toy parasol.

" That is a queer application of the aristocratic principle, certainly," Marston mused, " or the sacrifice of the many to the few ! That fellow devotes himself exclusively to the corruption of the rising generation, to save money, in order that one little lady may be developed into a perfect specimen of womankind ! We live and learn ! As Mr. Squeers says—' she's a rum 'un is Natur ! ' But d——n the fellow's impudence for wanting to make me his accomplice ! "

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN WHICH MARSTON LYNCH HAS SOME OF HIS NOBLES
BROUGHT DOWN TO NINEPENCE.

MR. MERRIPEBBLES took a furnished house at the West End of London; that is to say, Mr. Merripebbles took it nominally—the real tenants being his wife and Miss Carlton. The house was furnished as most well-to-do middle-class dwellings are, now-a-days, without a trace of character or individuality, without one relic or indication that would make you decisively say “such and such a kind of man lived there once.” Poor old Merripebbles was not the sort of man to leave any very vivid mark after him. His changeable restless wife was one of those active reformers, who are generally discovered, at the end of a given period, to have left things in exactly the state they found them. The one being in their little household, who alone could have given true colour and character to the dreary platitudes of glass and mahogany around them, was a changed being, taking interest in few things.

Maud was very wretched. Not grief, but anger—dull, vindictive, unrelenting anger had taken possession of her—to the exclusion of all other feelings. Her beautiful dream of life was over: the fairy prince had married the pretty shepherdess—treating her, the all-powerful enchantress, with disdain. She would weave spells around them yet, and crush them in their own rose bower.

Sometimes for days she would neglect her toilette, her studies, almost her food even—and mope in savage loneliness. Then she would take a self-torturing pleasure in dressing herself in her costliest garments, and displaying her rarest accomplishments, passing herself in scornful review, as it were; as though to say, “And he refused all this;”—the all “this,” splendid in external beauty and a thousand graces, being valueless to the vast heart full of love within, that had been rejected too.

I think a really wise friend at this period would have saved Miss Carlton from herself. But alas! she had none such acquaintances in London; they had but few, and these were people pinned down to the senseless conventionalities of middle-class life, young women brought up to think of nothing but to catch husbands—a description of “game” which, I am assured by numerous complaining *mammas*, the utter uselessness (not by any means invariably counterbalanced by the existence of a very remarkable degree of ornament) of the modern class daughter is making more “shy” every day. Among such young persons, who are merely saved from utter frivolity by a strong dash of heartless cynicism in the pursuit of their material interests, a nature like Maud’s could find little sympathy.

Young ladies of this kind, pinched, padded, gummed, greased, and tortured, laughing over their hothouse bouquets (the price of which in more honest times would have bought shirts for their struggling, bankrupt, despairing fathers), Maud was thought masculine. It was because she was so feminine, that those little speaking dolls could not comprehend her.

All that there was of her was thoroughly woman, she was big of heart, and brain!—she was a giant vine, trailing on the earth, her rich fruits crushed and wasting for want of a goodly tree to twine herself round. Any miserable sticks were enough for the little creeping plants about her.

Mrs. Merriplebbles scolded and entreated, consoled and

cried. She treated her daughter with a good deal of choice invective which she called religious exhortation. She set divers weak-eyed individuals in black coats, and white cravats of various cuts, to talk to the young lady. The reception experienced by those gentlemen was seldom encouraging. The best consolation they had to offer her wounded spirit, was generally in the form of a lecture upon surpllices or painted windows. Some of them, of a more practical turn, were of opinion that she could not do better than devote her energies and fortune to the cause of the unconverted Heathen, and in fact emigrate with the speaker as a Missionary bride: an allusion to the street door usually cut short their interviews.

Sometimes it pleased her to show herself in public, when Marston Lynch and his wife were most likely to see her. She would taunt Lucy with her dazzling beauty and riches, from opera boxes and carriages. The rueful woe-be-gone looks the poor little successful rival would cast towards her lost friend, were triumphs to the latter.

But the triumph of all was still with Lucy, and the thought rankled.

And how was our worthy friend, Don Sancho de Saumarez, getting on all this time?

Well, upon the whole, he was progressing as favorably as could be expected. In the first place, he was in Maud's most secret confidence. In the second, he was nearer her equal in intelligence and acquirements than any one else she was in the habit of seeing. Moreover, dogged and persistent admiration of a woman, in spite of cruelty and insult, will eventually have some softening influence on the most obdurate. Even Maud could explain to herself how it had been brought about. Don Sancho was a daily visitor at her mother's house, with a kind of tacit understanding that he was Miss Carlton's suitor.

There was one thing that perplexed our diplomatic friend not a little. This was Maud's unshaken determination of vengeance upon Marston and Lucy. Saumarez had made her a promise to which she intended holding him.

He had promised to show her enemies, as she called our poor unoffending young friends, ruined. Let him do this and he might claim his reward.

Now, as we have seen, Don Sancho was a very good-natured fellow, and without a particle of malice. It would give him real pain to ruin Marston.

Besides, he didn't see very clearly how he was to do it. He had intended to act upon the principle of giving our hero plenty of rope, and then taking credit to himself for his execution. However, as he thought Marston had not perhaps quite rope enough, he thought there would be no harm in buying him an extra yard or two.

He was really a very pleasant fellow. If he was doing you an ill turn, he was sure to do it agreeably. If he had found it necessary, as might happen in an extreme case, to poison a friend, he would have infallibly made the mixture palatable. The little shove he meditated giving our hero down hill he administered in the shape of a most friendly slap on the shoulder.

He induced one of the scores of small capitalists for whose discovery he had a remarkable nose, to start a satirical publication, of which he made Marston the Editor at a tolerable salary.

This act of friendship stood him in excellent stand. It even partially reconciled him to Lucy. You see this good fellow could not bear to have enemies.

The principles of the new journal were avowedly of the most savage description. Every public character, on the least provocation, was to be attacked without mercy. Marston having a decided vocation for this kind of composition, was not long in attracting to himself and his paper a considerable share of the public attention. A few week's editorship saw Master Lynch in the possession of a widely increased London reputation, and also of some few dozen influential and dangerous enemies.

I think that an enthusiastic young author, with nothing but his authorship to depend on, had better (from the point of view, be it understood, of material interest)—take to

drinking, gambling, horse-racing, alchemy, the search after the Elixir of Life—travel, in fact, on any of the turnpike roads to ruin that reach the goal by a short cut—than seek it by the circuitous and cheerless path of personal satire. It is all loss and no gain. You attack a hundred people: you immediately make a hundred enemies,—almost as expensive a stud to maintain as a hundred horses. If you are honest, keen-sighted, and eloquent, so much the worse for you. Your feelings prompt you to select the basest of mankind for your castigation: your wits give you the clearest insight as to the faults by which they are most distinguished, and naturally most anxious to conceal; your eloquence lends you colours to paint them as they are. A bad man hates the truth, as an ugly woman does a photograph. The secret that he is an ass, is the most dangerous one you can impart to a fool. He will never forgive it, for may it not have been true?

The Roman proverb, that "written letters will remain," is more true as applied to satirical than to any other class of literature. I believe that there never was a line printed against any person—in his own country and language—that did not come to his eyes with full knowledge of, or shrewd means of guessing at the writer, and not one such line, do I believe, was ever really forgotten or forgiven. No matter how obscure your organ, how harmless your intention,—if you have once removed the cuticle of a moral sore, however slight, the patient will remember the pain, and store up its memory against the operator. And of the classes the most dangerous to satirise are those usually selected by the young writer (on the irrational principle of the unclean bird) as butts for his satire, namely, the men of his own thin-skinned order. I have often seen "quarrels of authors" apparently made up, the former enemies swearing by and hugging each other like Siamese twins. If ever there has been a paper war between two such people, I look upon the alliance as unsound; one that no community of interests or ties of subsequent good-fellowship can hold long together.

They may dedicate books to each other—write, live, eat, drink, and smoke together! there will still rankle in the breast of one, at least, some such recollections as the following:—

“This man once exposed me in the act of plagiarism, injustice, or ignorance. He robbed me of half such or such a success by proving that I had stolen my fable from another writer. He dragged my former needy existence to light, when I was compelled to do things for a livelihood that I have not since cared to talk about. He cut up my favourite book or lashed my pet song. He called my political honesty into question on this occasion, and ridiculed my grammar on that.”

And, take my word for it, this smouldering fire will break out at some future time. The two friends cool. One of them—say the honest but inconsiderate satirist—following what I maintain to be his inevitable destiny, has not kept pace with the world so rapidly as his late friend and former enemy. The latter, wise in his generation, has made friends, and has many gates of success open to him. It is now in his power to help the other with commissions, introductions, favorable notices, and what not. Let the other ask for anything of the kind, and speedily awaken to a sense of his mistake.

And the man who thus takes what he conceives to be his legitimate revenge, need not be a bad or vindictive man in the least. With all the imaginative classes, *amour propre* is excessive, and its promptings are too often mistaken for principles.

The most philosophic among us, even though at the moment he rises from the last dash of a savage article upon an unknown or disliked author, reading a similar stricture upon his own works, will, to a certain extent, believe the writer of the latter to have been actuated by motives of baseness and calumny or envy.

If I were to see to-morrow Sir Edward Lytton and Mr. Alfred Tennyson walking arm in arm, laughing at each other's jokes, and hanging on each other's words, do you suppose I should believe in the genuineness of such a

coalition? Can the Poet Laureate—unless he be more than man, and less than Poet—ever forget the sneer at his merits (aimed through his pension) in the *New Timon*? If Sir Edward were to live for a hundred years—attaining to a thousand cheap editions, ten thousand Baronetcies, and a million University Rectorships, would he not writhe to his dying day under the scorching of these eight imperishable lines in *the Old Timon* and *the New*?

“Such was the Old—here comes the New!

Regard him—a familiar face!

I thought we knew him—What! ’tis you,
The padded man who wears the stays.

“Who charm’d the girls and kill’d the boys,
With dandy pathos, when you wrote,—
A Lion you!—who made a noise,
And shook a mane *en papillottes*?”

No! the “mane *en papillottes*,” is beyond earthly forgiveness.

Take another view of the picture. Assume that through ignorance, temper, or prejudice, you have attacked a good man unjustly. In addition to having a crime on your conscience, premeditated or not, you have a good man for your enemy—a sad state of things at any time. For there are few men so good that they can do no more than forgive an injustice. The best can rarely bring themselves to esteem or encourage its perpetrator.

And of the above homily, what is the moral? I really do not know of any, except the one pointed at by Dr. Watts, in his excellent ballad of “the Busy Bee,”—only for little children” in the striking lines upon the “angry passions,” read “literary gentlemen,” It weakens the rhythm, but naturally strengthens the application to the case in point.

At any rate Marston Lynch made enemies by his, or rather Don Sancho’s new publication—many of them men who at a future time might have been glad and able to serve him. He made little else it is true. For writing of that lively and pregnant description, though greatly relished among the personal friends of the satirised, does not always

command appreciators outside those circles. The publication, in fact, did not pay. Marston Lynch, after having submitted to a dozen successive reductions of salary, found himself suddenly deprived of his weekly excitement. The *Journal* stopped.

At this period Mrs. Lynch was on the eve of making an addition to the family.

Marston finished his five-act comedy in a hurry. He had quite departed from his original design. The conclusion was an anti-climax, vamped up from stale French materials. Marston took it to his friend Toplin, of the Cork-steet Theatre.

Mr. Toplin having detained the MS. a month, returned it unopened. Marston had questioned, in his late *Journal*, the talents and charms of a new actress, a great favourite of Mr. Toplin's, but, it should be added, not of Mrs. Toplin's. The manager had been heard to say, that he would have nothing to do with a pitiful fellow who could be so unmanly as to attack a lady.

The piece "went the round" of all the principal theatres, and was rejected at all in succession.

Lucy was confined of a little boy—who came into the world with a scanty supply of comforts waiting for him.

Marston, driven by his necessities, consented to the production of his piece at one of the minor theatres, that had been taken by a needy speculator, chiefly with a view to extorting money from amateurs, ambitious for a public *debut*. Our hero was to be paid a small sum for each nightly representation; the piece was acted by a wretched gang of shop-boys, ballet girls, and supernumeraries. The theatre, sank into disrepute by various successive mismanagements, was considered beneath the notice of the newspapers. The piece dragged on for a week, and then died out of the bills. Marston was not sorry—he had been ashamed of it.

Hopeless struggling, "cold water," and unceasing disappointment are a bad regimen for young men of our hero's constitution.

Marston Lynch fell ill.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN WHICH MRS. MERRIPEBBLES IS ATTACKED WITH
CHOLERA AND OTHER AILMENTS.

THE cholera visited London, and Mrs. Merripebbles, as might have naturally have been expected, made immediate arrangement for catching it. She began by frightening herself dreadfully, and passing in dismal review the deadliest sins she remembered to have recently committed. Having satisfied herself that the purchase of a rather handsome bonnet, a Saturday night visit to the opera, the written permission to her eldest son at boarding-school to learn the fiddle, and a few such enormities, were quite sufficient grounds for a special visitation of an avenging providence on her offending head, and having thereby worked herself into a state of nervous preparation for any contagious or epidemic malady that might happen to present itself, she proceeded to raise her edifice on the foundation she had so elaborately planned. She studied in succession every quack panacea that she saw advertised or heard suggested, following the directions of each (and compelling all members of her household who would submit to her dictation, to do the same), with scrupulous and enthusiastic fidelity until its successor appeared. It was certainly no fault of our impetuous old friend if the cholera would not visit her hospitable mansion. She spared no pains to coax the expected guest by assurances of a favourable reception. She dosed Merripebbles with

patent pills till that crushed worm was almost upon the point of turning, and actually did hint at business in the North of England. The pills, however, it was suddenly proved on the representations of a homœopathic apostle, would eventually result in convulsions and death. So they were abandoned; and the family nourishment, for the space of two or three days, consisted of half a thimble-ful of globules. Homœopathy, in its turn, came as speedily to grief, and the Cold Water Cure did injury in its stead. Number 38A, Westphalia Villa (Oh! those villas, terraces, and gardens of modern civilization! when will one of them acquire such a distinctive character as to make any name more appropriate to it than another?) was converted into a temporary tank. The bluenosed and ague-stricken Merripebbles (the *café-au-lait* which he loved being ruthlessly cut off) sat shivering over a breakfast-cup full of milk and water, and washed-out servants gave warning as distinctly as their chattering teeth would allow them. Hydropathy went the way of its predecessors, and was succeeded by a reign of carnivorism. Animal food was discovered to be the only preventive or remedy for cholera. The butcher's bills of Number 38A augmented fearfully, and the mansion from morning till night smelt like a Fleet Street tavern. This ensanguined state of things continued till the nominal master of the house felt himself rapidly degenerating into cannibalism, and sickened at the bare mention of steak and gravy. Still, the cholera most uncivilly refused to come, in spite of the hospitable arrangements made for its welcome. Mrs. Merripebbles thought she would give it another chance. A diplomatist, in the Cognac interests, had pointed out, through the columns of a daily newspaper, that the only possible safety for the human race, during the existing crisis, lay in the immoderate consumption of neat brandy. It was now the spirit merchant's turn to crow defiance at the supplanted butcher. Under the new dispensation, Mrs. Merripebbles herself (usually a pattern of abstemiousness) suffered frequently from headache, and required, more than

once, to be conducted to her bed-chamber in a most decided state of medicine; while the lax behaviour of her domestics (especially that of her most obedient servant, otherwise husband), at this stage of the Merripebbles' domestic pharmacy, was such as to suggest grave inquiries into the comparative evils of diseases and remedies. A vegetarian high-priest turned up opportunely, while the house had yet a character to lose, and the greengrocer came in for *his* turn of patronage. Cucumbers, melons, vegetable marrows, cabbages, and stone fruit—with cider and preparations of lemon-juice as beverages—were the staple articles of consumption in the establishment; and, at length, Mrs. Merripebbles had her reward. A conscientious persistence in this last-mentioned nutritious *régime*, for three or four days, made her seriously ill. She had now the triumph of proving her words good. She had said, from the commencement, that she knew she was going to have the cholera, and now she had got it. Mrs. Merripebbles took to her bed, with excusable pride and satisfaction.

During this time, Maud Carlton had, as usual, pursued her own course—eating and drinking what she pleased (when she cared to do either), and treating her mother's sanitary fidgets with her habitual contempt for all irrational vagaries save her own. One evening, though, she perceived that Mrs. Merripebbles was seriously indisposed, and in need of assistance. The emergency was a godsend to Miss Carlton. We have seen this young lady exclusively occupied in nursing a certain vulture, to which all kinds of ugly adjectives might be applied—selfish, morbid, and what not—which she encouraged to feed upon her inmost heart. The illness of a really affectionate and beloved parent induced her to neglect this objectionable pet for a brief while, and allowed her to give unfettered play to the strong and good sense and stronger love of her unspoiled nature.

She carried her mother up to bed (the nominal assistance of a weak-kneed footman counting for nothing in the

transaction). She sent out for simple remedies, which she applied with her own hand, and watched her parent through a long night, as lovingly and as tenderly as Lucy Lynch herself could have done. No; no, not quite as tenderly, perhaps; for, when Maud's mother said a foolish thing (as she did frequently), Maud could not repress an expression of contempt for fools and foolishness generally—the eternal mistake of foolish people of all ranks—social or intellectual.

In the morning, Mrs. Merripebbles, awakening from a feverish sleep, insisted on getting up. She was much better, she said. Maud saw that she was nothing of the kind, and refused her permission.

Mrs. Merripebbles, of course, flew into a passion. She had gained one point by proving that she had been attacked by cholera (which was not the case). It was now her duty to establish a second by manifesting that her last pet nostrum was an efficacious remedy for the disease that was hurrying thousands of unprepared immortal souls to perdition, &c. Briefly, she insisted on being supplied with a certain draught from the particular Pharmacopœia just then in favour, which Maud knew to be all but a deadly poison under the circumstances, preparatory to putting on her clothes, that she might go forth to administer health and consolation in the highways and alleys.

Maud paid no attention to the request, knowing its unreasonableness. A servant entered and announced the arrival of Don Sancho de Saumarez—(he had resumed the Spanish honorary distinction, for want of other variety).

"I forbid you to receive that man, Maud," said Mrs. Merripebbles, sharply.

"Tell him so," said Maud, quietly, to the servant; "or rather tell him my mother is ill, and I cannot leave her. He may come again."

"No, let him wait"—(the patient sat up in her bed)—"till I come down to tell him what I think of him—what I know of him, and forbid him my house for ever."

"You had better not excite yourself, mamma; my message will be sufficient for the present."

The servant left the room, well knowing which message it would be most incumbent on her to deliver—namely, Miss Carlton's.

It should be stated that Mrs. Merripebbles, during her cholera panic, believing that the time was come for her to set her house in order, had looked around her to see in what condition she would be likely to leave things after her. The prospect of her daughter at the mercy of Don Sancho had not appeared to her in a favourable light. The emergency of the case enabled her mental vision to act; unobstructed by temper or prejudice, she had been permitted to see Don Sancho pretty much as he was. She felt him to be undeserving of Maud's love, and knew, moreover, that Maud did not love him. Their constant meetings and secret conferences inspired her with suspicion. The tie that bound two such uncongenial spirits was to her a mystery. She considered her daughter's soul in peril, and paid Don Sancho de Saumarez the compliment of believing him the fiend by whom it was endangered. Sancho would have been delighted to know that he stood so high in anybody's estimation.

"Give me my draught, Maud—let me go and speak to that man," said Mrs. Merripebbles.

"It is useless, mamma—he will have left the house."

Maud believed so.

"I say he has not. He is waiting for you. You wish to keep me here while you are plotting—Heaven knows what mischief. What is it you *do* plot together?"

"I will give you your draught, mamma, if you please; and you may follow your own counsel. I repeat, the man will have left the house—he dare not refuse to do so at my bidding. I will answer any questions you like *when* you are better; but you are feverish and over-excited *now*. Shall I give you the draught?"

"Yes."

Maud, who had always been accustomed to treat her

mother as a child, and who had now not the slightest intention of quitting the room all day, thought it an act of simple policy to substitute for the mixture demanded, which she knew would be injurious, a strong composing draught, of which she believed her patient stood in need. The latter having shown during the night that her palate was vitiated by fever, the young nurse imagined the difference of flavour would not be detected.

Mrs. Merripebbles, with the cunning of an invalid, watched the whole proceeding, and attached to it an undue significance. She took the potion from her daughter's hand, and affected to swallow it. In reality she only held it in her mouth. In a few seconds she sank back upon her pillow, and counterfeited slumber.

Maud sat for a few seconds with a book on her lap, and her eyes fixed on vacancy. The servant returned with a message that Don Saumarez could, on no account, leave the house without seeing Miss Carlton, the business he had to communicate being of the utmost importance.

Maud gave vent to an exclamation of impatience; she was really annoyed at being called away from her mother's bedside. Moreover, to be drawn back into the train of thought and feeling which the presence of Saumarez suggested was irksome to her. This one little bit of unselfish duty had been such a relief!

She said briefly that she would receive the not over welcome visitor, and motioned the servant from the room.

She stooped her face over her mother's, on which she left a scarcely palpable kiss, really to assure herself that she might leave her patient for a few minutes in safety. The counterfeit sleeper construed the movement differently, and acted her part with increased persistence.

Maud descended to the front drawing room (an apartment which she had appropriated to her own use for some reason or another: the view pleased her, or the noise was less; in a word, the queen willed it), where she found Don Sancho de Saumarez awaiting her in an imposing attitude on the sofa. This room, it should be observed, was sepa-

rated from an inner one (having independent external communication), by folding doors, after the invariable fashion of modern well-to-do dwellings. The folding doors were closed, and the inner apartment was one but seldom made use of.

The Son of Somebody was unusually mysterious, and the close observer would have detected a slight dash of brigand or bravo in his otherwise picturesque garb. His hat was a thought more slouched and broader in the brim than usual. He also wore an imposing mantle, which he grasped from the inside as though it concealed the hilt of a poniard. Don Sancho had evidently left home this morning in the capacity of a villain, and had "made up" accordingly.

He kept the slouched hat on till the idol of his affections had made her appearance, when he started up from his gloomy *pose* and cast it from him contemptuously (not till she had had time to observe the set of it, though). The lady received him with what a less persistent admirer might have considered chilling contempt. Don Sancho did not mind this in the least. He bent over the lovely jewelled hand that was nonchalantly held out to him, and touched it respectfully with his lips. It was the first time he had attempted such a freedom. Miss Carlton made a scarcely perceptible movement—expressive of indignant revulsion—and looked at her hand as if she considered it had received contamination from the jet-black moustache of our Mexican diplomatist (she needed not have been alarmed: the dye would not come off,) but afterwards threw it, as it were, from her heavily, on to the table, as though she were reckless what became of it.

"A daring liberty, I admit," said the burlesque Fra Diavolo, "but I have earned the right to it."

"How so?"

Don Sancho buried his gloved hand in one of the recesses of his mantle, and drew forth—not a pistol or a poniard—but a harmless sheet of note paper, written over in a pale, nervous, little female hand, which he threw on

to the table, as though he had been Faulconbridge, and the sheet of paper the Duke of Austria's head.

Maud forgot that there was such a thing as a sick mother in the world. Her cheek turned crimson as she recognised the handwriting and signature; and she bit her lips in a fierce and ill-omened manner. The letter was in Lucy Lynch's hand-writing—her rival's (the contempt she felt for the timid, tremulous caligraphy was indescribable!) and was dated from an unknown street in Kentish Town. Maud's vindictive bosom glowed with triumph as she read the following lines:—

DEAR MR. SAUMAREZ,—I am afraid this will not find you, as, from the fact that you have not been to see us for so long, I suppose you to have left London. If it does reach you, I hope it will bring you to see us. Marston has been ill with a brain fever, and has not long been pronounced out of danger. We were compelled to leave our comfortable rooms where you came to see us, for we could not afford the expense. We are in a very humble place now, but I do not think that will be an obstacle to your coming to see us. I am sure if you would come and sit a little with my dear husband you would do him much good. His friends—Mr. Markworth, and Mr. Clough especially—have been most kind to us in our great troubles. But for them my dear Marston would not have been preserved to me. But I know he thinks more of you than any other friend. He is so weak and despondent, he requires some one like you to encourage him with hopes for the future. Dear Mr. Saumarez, I do not write to ask you for assistance—I have no fear for the future—for I know what my husband's vast talents are when he is able to exercise them, and that he is good as he is clever, and will exert himself for me and his darling child as he would not for his own sake. But I know it must be some time before he can resume his occupations, and his weak condition makes him exaggerate his difficulties. He says he had no business to turn author—that the small faculties he had have left him, and that he will never be able to work

again. *You* know him better than that, and I wish you would come and encourage him by a few of your cheering words. If you would tell him of something to do (such as you are constantly hearing of)—and *that you know he will be able to do it as well as ever he could in his life*—it would do him so much good. *We do not want money at all.* We have money for a month at least. Marston had a book sent him to translate before he was taken ill. Mr. Markworth has translated it for him—and would not take any of the money for it—was not that kind of him? He has done it very well—Marston says a great deal better than he could—but of course *I* cannot believe that. In a week or two he will be quite well and able to write a play or paint a picture. I cannot tell you how patient he has been, and how good to me. The only thing that makes him peevish, I know, is seeing me, as he thinks, straitened and overworked. But I really am very strong, though I do not look it. Dear Mr. Saumarez, pray excuse this tedious scrawl, and if you can find time *do* come and see Marston. He talks about taking a common clerk's situation, and all kinds of wild things (owing to his weakness), which I know a few words from you would drive out of his head. He is calling to me for his draught, and it is time I should conclude.

“Dear Sir, yours very sincerely,

“LUCY LYNCH.

“P.S. I do not write at all a good hand, but I can copy very neatly. I copied Marston's plays for him, and they were quite satisfied with my work at the theatres. Do you think you could get me any copying to do? It would be a great amusement for me in the long evenings—only I would not have Marston know I did such a thing for worlds. It would make him wretched; but *I* should positively like it above all things—for the mere sake of being occupied.”

Maud Carlton had left off biting her rosy lip. It quivered a little, and her hand trembled, as she read the

close of this rambling attempt at self-deception. But she had cast her better angel from her; and, to be obdurate as she had determined, she must needs be cruel to exaggeration.

"Well?" she said, laying down the letter.

"Well," Saumarez echoed, "are you satisfied?"

"What with?"

"With the hopeless degradation of your enemies—and mine in the share I have taken in effecting it?"

"No—you are an impostor. What have you done towards it? Were you the means of giving the man the brain fever?"

"Yes," was the cool reply.

Maud was nonplussed by the deliberate statement. After a few seconds' pause she asked—

"How so?"

"I overtaxed his brain and undermined his resources. I repeat, are you satisfied?"

Miss Carlton buried her face in her hands, and then rose to walk angrily backwards and forwards. She turned abruptly upon her companion with the question—

"Have you been black-hearted villain enough to leave this letter unanswered?"

"Yes."

"You have left your friend to misery and starvation for the sake of your own interest——?"

"Say passion, and I admit it. For the third time, are you satisfied?"

Saumarez could be nothing he pretended to be—not even a scoundrel. He received Lucy's letter when he happened to be in a good humour (as he generally was) and remarkably flush of money. He had sent Mrs. Lynch a friendly loan of ten pounds, enclosed in the most genial and encouraging letter imaginable—apologising merely for not paying the requested visit, on the plea of urgent business on the Continent. The latter may be taken at once as a proof that he had no intention of leaving England for the present.

"No," said Maud, after another pause—and speaking rather to herself than wishing to compliment the man she considered the mere instrument of her vindictiveness with any explanation of her motives—"No—no! a hundred times, No! He is happier—better—more beloved than ever. Here is this wax doll lifted into martyrdom by her devotion to him. No doubt he loves her, and has faith in her. They have a child. He has friends, who love and toil for him. Why should mere chance comers—people whose names I never heard—have the privilege of being near him in his sorrows, and of helping him through them, to mock me with his felicity and greatness that I alone am debarred from sharing? Who are these men?"

"Nobodies. Ask nine people out of ten *what* they are, and your answer will be, 'starving vagabonds.' One of the men, mentioned in the letter, is a writer, whose name has never appeared in print, and is notorious for his powers of doing other people's work well, and his own carelessly. The other is a clever painter, who would neglect a commission for a Duchess's portrait, in order to paint a sign in liquidation of a tavern supper."

"How dare you revile such men, who can be true to a suffering friend, knowing what you are yourself?"

"I do not revile them. I merely describe them. They are better men than I am—than I have been, for the last six months, at any rate. They are men who can do no good for themselves, but are incapable of doing any harm to others. You see, I am perfectly aware of my own moral inferiority."

"They are noble creatures," Maud exclaimed, with spontaneous enthusiasm, "whatever else they are. And what must he be who can command the friendship of such men? No, no—I cannot bear—the thought that he can be well and happy, and honoured, and owe none of it to me, is intolerable."

"What will satisfy you?" inquired Saumarez, with an assumed expression of despair." "I confess I am getting weary of my task. It is not so easy to be a rascal as I

thought it, whatever the reward. Release me from my promise, I will release you from yours—and Marston Lynch will become a rich man in a week."

"How so?" Miss Carlton snapped sharply at the new bait offered to her vengeful appetite.

"His uncle's health is failing. He is getting alarmed at the prospect of death, and remorseful for past misdeeds. He is coming to London in a few days, expressly to find out and befriend Marston; he has written to tell me so."

"Let him dare!" Maud laid her hand on her writing-desk, in which Don Sancho well knew the document, so perilous to Gregory Lynch, which he had entrusted to her, to be concealed.

"Nothing short of the absolute ruin of these young people will appease you, then?"

"Nothing, nothing!" Maud's voice was hoarse. Her rich quick imagination had called up a picture of the man she loved ending his days happily with the woman she hated—which her evil untrained temper could not bear.

"Give me back that will, then."

"What for?"

"To use in furtherance of your cruel determination. I find I cannot recede. Ask me no more questions—make no further conditions, except this stipulation, that if, in a month's time, I do not claim the reward, having earned it on your own terms—for which I have forfeited all claims to honour and self-respect—our contract is at an end."

Maud unlocked her desk and took forth the will. She was about to hand it, with some reluctance, to her companion, when she hastily drew back her hand, and replaced it in its original hiding place with great precipitancy.

Saumarez had for once proved himself a bad actor. His eyes had glistened too brightly and his fingers had quivered too nervously in eagerness to recover possession of the parchment.

"No," said Maud, as she relocked her desk. "You are too eager for it. If this be really the life and death power you have represented it, I will hold it in my hands. Fulfil

your contract by other means. You have been villain enough to cheat Marston Lynch of his inheritance ; I will have a guarantee that you do not cheat me of my revenge."

A groan was heard from the inner room, and the sound as a heavy body falling.

Maud ran to the folding doors and burst them open—Saumarez following.

Mrs. Merripebbles lay on the carpet half dressed, clutching at a table cover, which she had dragged down with a shower of albums and parlour ornaments.

"Mamma!"

Maud seized her mother round the waist, and endeavoured to lift her to a sofa.

"Stand off, girl!—do not touch me," the mother shrieked, with an expression of horror; and then added, hurriedly, in a subdued and unnatural tone: "I am in pain all over, my dear—that is why you must not touch me. I came down to ask you to fetch a doctor. I fainted at the door. That is all."

"But, mamma,—the draught I gave you——"

"Aha! the draught!" Mrs. Merripebbles screamed again her own natural scream, and once more subsided into her constrained tone. "It is the pain, my dear. Fetch me a doctor. Go yourself, and leave me in the front room"

"Run, you," said Maud to Saumarez, as if she had been speaking to a dog.

Saumarez could desire nothing better. Any chance to distinguish himself; even that of offering cabmen half-a-crown a mile to drive like the devil!

He disappeared in an instant.

"Let me take you up to bed, mamma," said Maud, her eyes full of tears.

"No; the front room—on the sofa. Then go, and call the servants. They will not hear the bell."

Maud did as she was desired. She conducted her mother to a couch in the front room, which she hastily quitted, *taking her writing desk with her.*

"She has taken it!" gasped the sick woman, looking after her daughter; "and I may die, and never know its contents."

Maud returned in a few seconds, without her writing desk, but followed by two or three servants, and old Merripebbles, just arrived from an unwonted business absence of forty-eight hours. The poor broken-hearted old fellow came staggering into the room, rocking to and fro, like a reed shaken by the wind, under the shock of this terrible calamity, and fell moaning on his knees by the side of the adored, imperious wife, by whom he lived and moved and had his being.

"Not ill—my darling—my honoured wife. Not very—dangerously—seriously? Tell me you are not so, from your own dear sensible lips—and I shall know it is the truth."

To the astonishment of Merripebbles, instead of a rebuke for this somewhat irrational display of feeling, such as he might have expected, he received only a tight cuddle round the neck, and a shower of kisses on his bald head from the lips that had been the temple porches of his own oracle for twenty years.

"Send them away—all but you—my dear, good husband," said a sweet voice, that Merripebbles scarcely recognised.

The whisper had been overheard, and the room was cleared in an instant. Merripebbles sat on the sofa, clutching his wife's hot hand tightly, as though his nervous fingers could keep in the life he feared was ebbing, and quaking with the apprehension of a helpless nature brought face to face with responsibility.

"My good, kind husband," Mrs. Merripebbles began; "it is just possible that I am dying—"

"No—no."

"It may be so—I hope not; for I should like to live to be a better wife to you——"

"Couldn't do it."

Merripebbles swallowed two streaming rivulets of tears, which nearly choked him.

"I am not afraid, but I have an earthly duty to perform. You will perform it for me—will you not—if I should be taken away? You never denied me anything yet."

"Never could."

"Then—time may be short—I suffer terribly; that unhappy girl, Maud, is conspiring with that moustached and painted villain (God forgive me if I am unjust; but no, I am *not*) to rob and ruin Marston Lynch. I do not know how, but the proofs are in her desk. I overheard a conversation between them. She thought she had given me laudanum, but I outwitted her——"

"My dear, pardon my presumption, but I think this must be the effects of fever. Miss Carlton, Maud, your daughter, with the moral and religious training you have given her, to be guilty of the slightest impropriety, much more——"

Mrs. Merripebbles smiled a sad smile, and tenderly kissed the swollen veins of her husband's quivering attenuated hand.

"Bless your old wrong head! As you always believed me infallible when I was wayward and peevish, it is natural you should oppose me when I am for once right. I have spoiled that girl, as you have spoiled me. I have encouraged her too much in her pride of wealth and beauty. What it has led her to it may be too late for me to learn. Promise me, perhaps as a last request, that you will strive to remedy any wrong I may have done her. If she has done wrong, consider it my fault, and treat it as I would have you treat a fault committed by me—not hushed up, or varnished over, but wiped out by the sternest atonement. Promise me this, my dear, faithful, simple-hearted Frank, who have been so foolishly obedient to me, through good and evil. This is a good request; comply with it, and you may feel less remorse for having devoted the best of your life to obeying the caprices of a wilful wicked woman. You will approve of the last thing she asked you to do; and so forget the many foolish ones. Promise me, my dear good Frank."

Merripebbles howled. He threw his long carcase, with

limp outstretched arms, across the prostrate form of his wife, and could only gasp, to an imaginary audience on the ceiling—

“She is ill—she is dying! What will become of me? She never spoke so like an angel before, and it’s the first time she ever called me Frank in her life!”

Still Merripebbles could not believe that a polished gentleman like Mr. Saumarez, and an accomplished young lady like Miss Carlton, could be guilty of anything wrong. His wife was wandering.

Don Sancho de Saumarez speedily made his appearance, accompanied by one of the most distinguished physicians in London. The Don had been careful to select a knight.

As I happen to be writing for *THE TRAIN*, and not for *The Lancet*, a kind of consideration often overlooked by modern writers of narrative, I will spare my readers the details of Mrs. Merripebbles’ symptoms and medical treatment; and simply state that she was pronounced by the physician in a most dangerous state; in which condition I will leave her for the present in the affectionate care of her husband and daughter.

Don Sancho finding himself rather at a discount, took his leave, and soliloquised,—

“Confound the old woman and her cholera! If it had’n’t been for her I should have recovered possession of the precious document. However, *she* can do no great harm with it.”

“What a spiteful madcap it is; and what an abominable nuisance! Now, if Marston were a sensible fellow, we might arrange it together. Get him to dress up in rags and take a crossing, just for a day or two—and point him out to her under these circumstances, and she would be satisfied. Or we might get up a sham report of the poor little wife committing suicide, driven to it by her husband’s ill-treatment—it the young fools would only play into my hands. No, that wouldn’t do; Marston a supposed widower, and my game is effectually flooded. However, they have such ridiculously strait-laced notions that neither

of them would accede to any such proposition. What a fool Marston is to be sure! Why if he would but consent to help me as a friend in my very rational pursuit of Miss C.'s comfortable fortune, I should only be too glad to put a few hundreds in his pocket by way of commission. But he wouldn't! Just now, too, when there are so many good things I might throw in his way! There is nothing I hate so much as disobliging a friend. But in the present case I really have no alternative. If I can injure him I must; and I suppose I can, if I try. Hard lines! for I really like him. Perhaps, though, I can make it up to him some day in one way or another."

The Don went to dine at his club, when he was congratulated by many distinguished persons—who had not been aware of his existence for the past three or four years (though he had repeatedly during that period dined at the next table to all of them)—on the rumour of his approaching marriage with a Longport heiress worth twenty odd thousand pounds a-year, an estimate of Miss Carlton's private fortune which Don Sancho de Saumarez was careful not to point out as exaggerated.

CHAPTER XXX.

TERRA INCOGNITA.

THERE exists in the moral topography of London, and of every great city whereunto the inexorable army of civilization, with its inalienable troop of camp followers—Wealth, Misery, Luxury, and Art—has penetrated, a kind of debateable ground, or no man's land, to which, till within our own time, no definite name or boundaries could be assigned; but the limits of which are now pretty generally understood, and which its enterprising discoverers have christened Bohemia. The territory has only recently been explored. For centuries, the world went on around it with scarcely an idea of its existence, and knowing no more of its whereabouts, its products, laws, and customs, than those of Prester John's kingdom, of the Aztec city of refuge, of Candide's El Dorado, or of the fabulous white republic of the Jebel-el-Kumri, in central Africa. There was said to be such a place, and it was believed to be inhabited by a strange race of men. That was all the world knew, or cared to know, about the matter. Gradually the restless spirit of discovery, exploring the moral as indefatigably as the physical world, led, after much circum-navigation, to the shores of Bohemia being sighted. A positive longitude and latitude were thus assigned to the country in the social map. Still the place remained only a kind of Japan—a land

whose harbours had been entered, and whose inhabitants had been seen and spoken with. *Voilà tout!* Its interior continued unvisited, and its customs a mystery. The former might have been penetrated, and the latter unravelled, without much difficulty or opposition on the part of the inhabitants, had the aspect of the country been more attractive. But the Bohemian coasts were pronounced barren and inhospitable, and Bohemian manners repellant. So the first adventurous visitors from the outer world sailed away in search of fairer climates and more genial tribes, and the Bohemians were left, in their bleak and barren fastnesses, to the undisturbed enjoyment of their own devices.

The time is not far distant when we shall be as familiar with Jeddo as with Battersea. Enterprise is like a raging fire, that "doth consume the thing which feeds its fury," and will not bate while there is a stick unconsumed within its reach. Civilization abhors ostracism in nations as nature abhors a *vacuum*. A community, now-a-days, has no more chance of living in and for itself, without letting the rest of the world into its secrets, than a settler in a New England village would have of passing a quiet month without imparting to his neighbours the fullest particulars of his name, his age, his birthplace, his occupation, and his political opinions. The mystery of Japan is doomed. Empires with fleets and armies to employ, merchants with ventures to make, *savants* pining for scientific novelties, authors perishing for want of unhackneyed subjects—these have sniffed the untasted prize from afar off, and are flocking round it like wolves round a newly-slain carcass. Let the mysterious empire refuse to open its gates to the clamorous visitors, and, like another wolf—he of the fable—they will speedily make an excuse for indignantly forcing them. The pressure from without is terrible—heaven knows how many tons weight to the Japanese cubic-foot—and the sides of the hermetically-sealed nation must collapse under it. Most of us may live to read "our own correspondent's" letters in the *Times*, written

from the British Lion Hotel, the Café de l'Europe, or the Columbian House, in Jeddo.

As it must be, according to the "manifest destiny" of Japan, so has it already been with Bohemia. The barriers of that formerly isolated country have been broken down, and its ports opened to the world. Still, little is yet known of it. The scanty accounts hitherto published have either been founded on the one-sided representations of interested natives, on the observations of hasty and superficial visitors, or, more frequently, on the statements of mendacious personages who have never visited the country at all.

I have lived and suffered in Bohemia, and, I thank heaven, have escaped from it so long ago as to be able to speak of its miseries, which no longer afflict me, without undue bitterness; and of its joys, which no longer tempt me, without partial fondness. Let me attempt a brief description of the land, as I know it.

Bohemia Proper, otherwise called Petróæa, or the Stony (there are other Bohemian provinces which I have never visited, but not one of which is entitled to the name of Bohemia Felix), is a kind of backslum suburb to the sister cities of literature and art. It is a stronghold of rebels, whereunto, as to the cave of Adullam, resort all such inhabitants of those regions as are in distress—"every one that is in debt, and every one that is discontented"—with the edicts of the modern king Saul, society—whom they are leagued together by a solemn vow to conquer and bend to the recognition of their claims. But, alas, for the Bohemian camp! there, the parallel with the Adullamites ceases. King Saul is too strong for them; and never a David has yet shown among them to organise and lead them to victory.

Many pleasant and humorous definitions of the Bohemian have been attempted. Those who really know him and his sufferings will acknowledge that his case is too serious a one for a feeling man to make light of. The inhabitants of Bohemia may be characterised generally as

men with high artistic or literary aspirations who cannot succeed in life. The causes of their non-success may be infinite. The Bohemian may be indolent, or vicious, or ignorant, or simply incapable. He may be an artist believing himself sent into the world with a mission for historic frescoes and altar-pieces, but whom an unaccountable negligence in early life to learn the external proportions of the human figure, or the chronic want of the price of a few yards of canvass, may have reduced to the ignoble necessity of colouring theatrical portraits or cheap photographs for a miserable livelihood. He may be a high-art dramatist, believing in his powers to resuscitate the Elizabethan drama (the Bohemian has generally faith in his own powers for achieving something or other that is not wanted)—which is as dead as Queen Elizabeth herself, and no one wishes to be startled by the apparition of its ghost—and unable to devote his mind to the supply of any real literary want of the day, such as novel, essay, or leading article. He may be a poet, and accustomed only to express himself in verse, in an age when verse is paid for (when at all) at a not much higher scale per measurement than the more expensive kinds of bonnet ribbon. He may be a profound philosopher and politician (I know such a Bohemian), with a knowledge of almost every spoken language and written book, able to write lucidly and brilliantly upon any subject, but who is branded as “crotchety”—that is to say, who prefers real independence of thought and action in a ragged coat and with dinner at certain intervals, to intellectual prostitution or uncongenial drudgery for the pitiful prizes of external respectability and a sufficiency of creature comforts. The Bohemian may be simply an ambitious ass, willing to turn his hand to any thing, but capable of accomplishing nothing satisfactorily; or an unfortunate waif or stray, thrown by accident on to the uncongenial soil, without strength or skill to wrest from it even such bitter and scanty fruits as it is capable of producing; or he may be a man of genius, with a tendency to fly off at a tangent

from his existing engagements in pursuit of some new experiment of living—or, simply, to get drunk and forget them.

There is another phase of Bohemianism, an exceptional one, it is true, which is, perhaps, the most deplorable of all—the literary Bohemian endowed with great and available general powers (what the French so happily characterise by the simple word *facilité*), who has sold himself into slavery, who writes in violation of his conscience and instincts, for the sake of a little ready money. His extrication from the gulf is far more hopeless than that of his needier and less capable brethren, who have still some sustaining principle and have not forfeited all hope of self-respect. Respectable people, shaking their heads, will deplore that such a man, with his vast talents and abundant earnings, should lead the life he does—namely, one of utter improvidence and dissipation. But the respectable people—perfectly satisfied with the propriety of their own pursuits, whatever they may be—do not know that this man's intellectual perceptions of what is right and wrong make him regard his exercise of those talents, for which they envy and admire him, with loathing, and the money it brings him as the wages of sin. The earnings of such a man are like the fairy money of the old superstition—they change quickly to dirt; wasted, as ill-gotten gains usually are.

Many respectable well-to-do authors and artists who have laboured ploddingly and successfully to hit the public taste, and whom you know in the enjoyment of their comfortable reward, will tell you rare stories of their early struggles in Bohemia, representing their past career as something terribly reckless and improvident, beset with difficulties of their own making. These men are usually impostors, who, if they ever visited Bohemia at all, must have done so in the *dillettante* spirit of Prince Rodolph associating with the thieves in the "Mysteries of Paris;" men who may have thrown themselves into the gulf as a mere passing experiment, but who had taken care to secure themselves to the shore by a rope of safety of some kind. The true

Bohemian is essentially an impracticable man. He will not be led by tether or driven in harness, He is at war with society, and usually dies with his weapons in his hand. Sometimes, it is true, *pris par la faim*, with a wife and children clamouring round him, he will lay down his weapons and go over, a docile soldier, to the ranks of his enemy, to make war on his former associates, betraying their stratagems and exposing their weaknesses; but these are rare exceptions.

The Bohemian is improvident, because he is poor. He can never estimate his earnings; therefore it is unreasonable that he should be expected to regulate his expenditure. He only receives money fitfully and uncertainly—often at long intervals; and your starving man is always intemperate in eating when he can get the chance. He drinks more than is good for him, as a rule; for much of his lot as a rule is cast in taverns, which are too often his exchange, his studio, and even his home. If he have a nominal home to go to, the door is frequently guarded by a griffin, in the shape of an unpaid landlady; or still worse, it is the abode of beings who will close his harassed day by a repetition (if silent, all the less bearable) of the reproaches that the world is ever casting in his teeth for opportunities wasted and successes not achieved. He is reckless of his personal appearance, for he loves not the world and the world loves not him, and he will not invest his hard-earned shillings in broad cloth and fine linen for the world's satisfaction. These are some of the Bohemian's numerous failings. His virtues, like those of all human beings whatsoever, vary according to circumstances. Those which more particularly attach themselves to his order are endurance, generosity, and above all an admirable degree of *esprit de corps*. Bohemians are true to one another through all difficulties. In the depth of their own sufferings they will help their still more unfortunate brethren, as a matter of course, just as a shipwrecked man on a raft will share his wallet of provisions with his fellow passengers. Heaven help them, and all poor wretches whatsoever, if this were not the rule.

It was on this inhospitable shore that Marston Lynch, at the age of twenty-four, found himself with a wife and child clinging to him, hopelessly shipwrecked, after a brief and troubled voyage, in dangerous seas, which he had rashly undertaken without a sailor's strength or experience, in which he had seen all his little worldly venture go down, and the turmoil and excitement of which had left him prostrate. Wrecked in Bohemia! it is as bad as to be wrecked in Kamschatka, where the natives may be kind and sympathising, but where there is no housing but seal-skin tents, and little food but the bark of trees and fish oil; where the nights are interminable and the frosts death!

It was fortunate for Master Lynch that he found the rough Bohemians kind and sympathising. But for their timely help, such as it was, he would have perished. When he was taken ill he was at the very end of his resources. He had no prospect of receiving money unless earned by the exercise of his brain. He was attacked with brain fever, and reduced to the condition of a mechanic with his arms broken,—worse, for mechanics provide against such emergencies by mutual-assistance funds—provisions which literary men never think of, or, if they do, can never agree sufficiently among themselves to put in practice. There was not one of Marston's old friends to whom he or his poor distracted little wife for him (Marston himself was delirious on the second day), could apply for temporary assistance. The breach with the Merripebbles' family, so mysterious in its origin to Lucy, left no hope from that quarter. Gregory Lynch was out of the question. The movements of Saumarez were so eccentric that there was no knowing where to find him, even if his friendship could be relied on, which Lucy had once more begun to doubt. Biglow Miles, last heard of at St. Petersburg, *en route* for the Mediterranean, might be at the antipodes by this time. To deprive Lucy of her last hope, an envelope had arrived by post on the very morning after her husband had taken to his bed, enclosing wedding cards

from Mr. and Mrs. Howker, and a note, in which the late Marian Crooze—after a little awkward preamble, which read, perhaps, just the least thing in the world like an apology for her condescension in having at last rewarded Howker's fidelity by making him *the* happiest man in the world, expressed her pleasure in stating that her *dear and affectionate* husband (the adjectives underlined by way of compensation for any possible injustice done to the now-adored Howker in the opening passages), had been appointed to the management of a branch of the business with which he had been so long connected, recently established at Gibraltar; to which pleasant locality the happy pair were about to sail immediately, there to take up *their* residence as a permanency. To this was added a postscript, in the bridegroom's hand, inviting Marston and Lucy to come out and see them whenever the former's engagements would permit, with the assurance that a new book of travels in Spain, by M. L., Esq., with illustrations by the author, was what the public wanted above all things, and would be more than sufficient to pay all travelling expenses. "*Mind you do,*" the bride had written in conclusion, with a true woman's determination to have the last word.

"If I could only take him there when he is better, to restore him quite to health," Lucy murmured, as she laid down the letter, kissing her unconscious patient.

The only intimate acquaintance our hero (let the word stand since it is written; but I shall not apply it to poor Marston again) had made since his sojourn in London had been a few young men of his own age, belonging to the class whose characteristics I have attempted to sketch. Let no one be in too great a hurry to attribute this to a taste for low society. Bohemian society is not low; it is simply eccentric, exceptional. Its intellectual attractions are of a very high order. If it is deficient in social elegancies and amenities, it is also free from the unmeaning and wearisome restraints of what is called "*polite society.*" Drawing-room philosophers may write till they tire, or even

till they incur that dreadful calamity of soiling their finger-nails, they will not succeed in convincing the rational portion of the community that it is better and wiser to waste one's time in the senseless fritter of "morning calls" and evening "receptions," than to sit and listen to the fearless discussion of vital truths by men of wit and learning, even though the Temple of Debate have a sanded floor, and its rites be performed to the unholy incense of tobacco-smoke. Marston Lynch not being what is called "a man of the world," did not possess the gift of making friends from motives of policy. He could not suddenly fall in love, as some people can, with a lord, a banker, a millionaire, a literary magnate, or a publisher, and take such rapturous interest in the welfare and family doings of such people as to claim immediate reward in the shape of substantial friendship, patronage, or employment. The only acquaintance Marston cared to cultivate was with people of his own age, with some congeniality of taste or character. The majority of such persons, among whom the chances of London life had thrown him, were men of the classes I have alluded to.

But these were, for the most part, out-of-door comrades, scarcely known even by sight to Lucy. Some of them, Marston had occasionally brought home for a cigar and a chat; but they had usually stopped so late, consumed so much gin-and-water, and spoken such dreadful profanation of men and things that Lucy had been accustomed to hold in the highest veneration, that the poor little woman looked upon them with something like pious horror. There was one gentleman, it was true—Mr. Clough, the celebrated artist—who had somewhat redeemed his character by taking notice of "baby," and earning the friendship of that important personage: but even this was an unsatisfactory offset to the unbecoming tint of Mr. Clough's linen, his inordinate passion for onions, and his unpleasant practices of swearing at every tenth word, and backing the majority of his assertions by bets. Another gentleman, Mr. Walrus, (the distinguished dramatist, poet, essayist, caricaturist,

and, in his opinion, vocalist and actor,), whom Lucy had been very much disposed to like, from the extreme suavity of his manners and the high moral tone of his conversation, in which he was accustomed to rebuke the too great freedom of his companions. But Mr. Walrus unfortunately displayed a tendency to get early drunk and quarrelsome; and was, furthermore, once detected in winking at the lodging-house maid-servant, who happened to enter the room during his enunciation of a delightful sentiment in praise of virtue, worthy of Solomon, or of Joseph Surface: whereby Walrus fell. There was also, little Doctor Nussknacker, the Viennese refugee, also a favourite with baby, who spoke English with scarcely a foreign accent, and knew everthing; who was a pattern of politeness, good-humour, and abstemiousness; who would not even smoke, and confined himself to one weak glass of grog per night; who never made his appearance without some little mark of attention to his pretty hostess, if it were only a bunch of violets, a small purchase of choice fruit, or the loan of an amusing book; who would listen to Mrs. Lynch's long and exciting stories of baby's ailments and progress in knowledge of the world, with as much patience and interest as if he had been a wet-nurse on probation, instead of a doctor of medicine and philosophy, and corresponding member of numerous learned societies. Lucy was disposed to like the doctor exceedingly, had she not heard him speak, seriously and excitedly, in defence of "Red Republicans" (horrid creatures, only associated in Lucy's mind with the butchery of that poor dear queen, Marie Antoinette); and humourously, in disparagement of her (Lucy's) favourite clergyman. Mrs. Lynch could not stand this. She at once charged the doctor with being a man of no religion whatever. To this the doctor replied, with grave and respectful humility, that Mrs. Lynch was in error: he had been born of Buddhist parents, but had been educated by a missionary of the shaking Quaker persuasion. The worst of these men, Lucy complained, was, that you could never tell when they were in earnest or not.

At any rate, Lucy considered none of them in the light of friends to whom she could apply in the hour of need, had she known their addresses (which was what very few people did know). The poor girl's experiences of men had been limited; she knew not the tests to distinguish the true from the false. But on the third day, Marston grew worse. The only sign of consciousness he had shown during the two first days had been persistently and coherently to forbid his wife to send for medical aid. A morbid terror of expense had taken possession of him—not unnatural to a penniless man with a fevered brain. Lucy, ever accustomed to obey, had complied with his wishes. But this morning he was so much worse. Was she doing right in obeying even him, who was never wrong, now that he was not master of his own senses? She would have given anything for some one to consult—even one of those strange men who scoffed and made game of everything, she had scarcely formed the wish when Mr. Markworth was announced.

Mr. Markworth was one of "those strange men" whom Lucy had not liked at all, his offence being that he was "so satirical." This is a favourite adjective with ladies, which they employ for the expression of a variety of disagreeable meanings, except the right one. Mr. Markworth was an easy-going cynic, who, having a possibly misplaced contempt for most things, always spoke with contemptuous toleration of everything—which was perfectly sincere on his part, but which Mrs. Lynch interpreted as being meant ironically. However, she was very wrong in disliking Mr. Markworth, as she soon had reason to admit.

This Markworth was a young man of good family, who had been educated at college with the belief that he would inherit a comfortable fortune. His father had speculated, lost every farthing, and shot himself. Young Markworth was left to himself with no resources but the exercise of his own talents—which were considerable, but not of a productive or popularly available character. He saw no path open to him but that of literature—for which he felt but

little vocation and no enthusiasm whatever. He wrote for a bare subsistence, with which he was negatively content. The effort of composition was hateful to him. Want and obscurity were preferable to sustained labour. He was a galley-slave to the stern task-mistress, Necessity, whom he only served upon compulsion, and within the strict letter of their hard bargain. He was a philosopher in his way, defying Destiny with much cheerfulness, from the bottom of the Bohemian pit into which he had been thrown, to cast him any lower. He was a man without hopes, and with the most infinitesimal cares.

He had called this morning intending to loiter away as much of the day in Marston's society as the latter might be disposed to allow him. He was greatly distressed to hear of his friend's illness, and with an expression of deep interest (Lucy wondered whether he was "making game") requested to see the patient. His experience at once told him that Marston was in great danger. He briefly informed Lucy that he thought medical assistance necessary, and that he would go immediately in search of a doctor.

He left the house, and soon returned in a cab (Mr. Markworth never divulged by what means he had raised the funds to liquidate that and subsequent expenses in the course of the day), accompanied by Doctor Nussknacker, laden with sundry packages and phials, and Mr. Thomas Clough, as an unattached reserve in case of emergencies—the latter flushed as to countenance, thick as to speech, and damaged as to hat. Mr. Clough having expressed the deepest concern for Marston, apologised to Lucy for his disordered appearance, on the plea that he had been up all night, finishing a picture by gaslight for the exhibition, and that he had been suddenly called to his friend's assistance before he had time to ——. The oratorical performance concluded abruptly with a hiccough; and Mr. Clough threw himself despairingly on a sofa, where he slept the sleep of innocence for the space of one hour.

The Doctor was a man of business, and, what was better, a man of brains and experience. He was a disciple of

the sage, Raspaill. Marston speedily found himself lifted as from a lake of infernal fire into a cool Elysium by the magic application of *eau sedative*—of which fountains should flow in every street, and all lancets, leech-jars, and blister materials whatsoever (which its invention should ere this have superseded), confiscated to pay the expenses of their erection. The Doctor and Markworth declared their intention of sitting up with their patient all night. It was wonderful by what simple words and cheering persuasions they induced Lucy, soon after their arrival, to quit that bedside which she had declared she positively would *not* leave on any account, to take a few hours' rest. The department for which Mr. Clough had been retained was that of light porter and general man of all work. As soon as he had recovered from his nap, he was sent out for physic, with which he returned, bringing in with him also an unmistakeable odour of fresh malt liquor, a small cylindrical paper labelled "Best Birdseye," and two clean pipes (the Doctor, as we have seen, did not smoke). Poor Lucy was strangely embarrassed by, and strangely grateful to, these odd auxiliaries. They had but two rooms, and, alas! no servant. Finding their means getting narrower, she had dismissed her little nursemaid, on the plea of incapacity; and in answer to all Marston's exhortations that a successor should be engaged, had said "she would see about it"—"there was no hurry"—"Baby was teething, and she could not bear him out of her arms," and the like. They were in debt, too, with the lodging-house people, and at every necessity for ringing the bell Lucy felt sick and giddy. It was marvellous how Mr. Clough relieved her on the majority of those trying points. He set the disordered room to rights with the skill and celerity (and much of the aspect) of a "drudging goblin." He made a bed of great coats and cloaks on the sofa, and insisted that Lucy should go to sleep thereon instantler, bidding her not to mind him as he was old enough to be her grandfather (Mr. Clough was in his three-and-twentieth year), and facetiously offering, if Mrs. Lynch should object to

smoke, to go out, and prevail on the fire to do the same. Lucy, half smilingly, was yielding to the sleep she found it no longer possible to resist, when Baby, from his cradled post at the foot of the sofa, began to cry. Lucy started up. Mr. Clough sternly ordered her to lie down again, and took the squalling heir to the estates of Lynch in his arms. As a rule there is always some one thing which a Bohemian can do much better than his legitimate work. Mr. Clough couldn't paint a baby very well, but he certainly possessed the gift of amusing and quieting one to a remarkable degree. Whether he had cultivated this as an eccentric accomplishment, less expensive of indulgence than billiards, skittles, or the colouring of meerschaums, or whether it came naturally to him through a love and tenderness for helpless and innocent creatures, might be disputed by skilful debaters; but I, for my part, incline to the latter opinion. Certain it is that on this occasion Marston Lynch, junior, was speedily brought, by his gentle treatment, from crying to crowing, and thence as rapidly to sleeping.

"What an excellent family man you would make Mr. Clough," murmured poor Lucy, with fast-closed eyes.

And it was one of the stupidest things she ever said in her life. Mr. Clough thought so.

When Lucy awakened from her nap in the evening, she found tea and shrimps awaiting her consumption. (Mr. Clough had captured a flying marchant of the latter, after a hot chase, terminating at the bottom of Salisbury-street). Baby, the indefatigable, was up again, and crowing in the highest glee imaginable on his new nurse's lap. The doctor and his companion were seated by the fire. They told her the patient was asleep, and progressing as favourably as they could expect. She crept noiselessly into the bedroom. Marston was tossing restlessly in a sorry enough substitute for sleep. But his face and hands had been washed, his linen changed, and his bed made. Everything in the room was in perfect order. Mr. Thomas Clough

had officiated in the double capacity of housemaid and *valet de chambre*.

I have no wish to disparage the kindness of that gentleman's heart, the excellence of his intentions, or the value of his services. But lest I should be accused of drawing a faultless monster, which the world never saw (by the way, I *have* already hinted at one or two blemishes in Mr. Clough's moral organization that should fully establish his human fallibility), I must mention another peculiarity in the Bohemian character, to the rule of which Mr. Clough was no exception. I have stated that the Bohemian *can* always do something better than his professional task. Let me add that he *likes* doing *anything* better than the same. The slightest excuse for neglecting his daily avocations is to him a godsend. Mr. Clough had been called, from the easel and brushes he loathed, to run errands, make beds, wash invalids, and nurse babies; and he was supremely happy.

In the fulness of time, Mr. Clough proposed supper, and went to fetch it. The materials were not costly or remarkably delicate. They consisted of a very large crab, some saveloys, and a pale slab of perspiring cheese. Mr. Clough was a little saddened to find that his hostess would not partake of any of these luxuries, which he had purchased expressly for her, in the belief that she required "strengthening." In furtherance of this view, he had also taken the liberty of bringing in with him a half-gallon can of the mildest porter, participation in which Mrs. Lynch also thankfully declined. Lucy insisted on passing the night by her husband's bedside. The doctor and Markworth yielded the post to her, holding themselves in readiness for any emergency in the adjoining room. The three friends spent the night together, sleeping as they best could on the chairs and sofa, and beguiling the wakeful hours with cribbage, and, except in the doctor's case, constant application to the mild porter and the best birdseye. Mr. Clough had sternly opposed a movement to convey Baby into the sick room. An atmosphere of dense tobacco-

smoke not being greatly conducive to slumber in the early stages of infancy, Baby proved wakeful throughout the night. Mr. Clough never murmured at the constant claims thereby made on his attention. Whenever Baby wanted to be taken up, up he was taken. Mr. Clough swore frightfully over his cribbage losses, called his adversaries by the foulest names, and accused them of the basest practices; but never so much as an impatient exclamation escaped him on Baby's account, even when the exigencies of his infant charge disturbed him at a critical point of the game. Lucy, in the next room, alternately shuddered at his fearful oaths, and wept tears of blessing and thankfulness at the merry songs and inexhaustible nonsense with which he kept the child amused. She wondered that it could be the same man!

Marston Lynch lay for many days in a most precarious condition. It is certain that nothing but the greatest skill and the most constant attention could have saved him. These, the staunch adherence of his rough and ready Bohemian friends supplied him with. It will be believed that Lucy's opinion of those gentlemen underwent a rapid and material change. She considered that, with one exception of course, there were no other such good men in the world. They had saved her husband's life—and what could ever repay that service? But with what wondrous unselfish devotion—with what utter hopelessness of reward they had effected this great good! It was true that their conduct was only another tribute to Marston's worth that he could attach to him the friendship of such men! But then, was it not a further proof of their excellence that they could practically appreciate his goodness? And how kind they were to her; but this was on Marston's account of course! How wonderfully they relieved her of every anxiety, lightened her of every burden—and all of them poor struggling men! She could never repay them; but how she hoped Marston would get strong immediately, if it were only to put some of those great schemes of his in

practice to make his fortune, if only that he might load these noble fellows with wealth and honours.

Poor little Lucy! She never once thought of the good that was in herself that would draw forth such good as might be in others as unerringly as loadstone will attract loadstone. She little thought that the friendly offices, commenced in a spirit of matter-of-course good fellowship for Marston's sake, had been continued and augmented in tenderness and pity for herself. She little thought that her unwonted apparition on the gloomy horizon of these cheerless Bohemians,

"Sick of pacing up and down
Ever more this London town,"

for the most part without kin or home or aim, was like the rising of a bright particular star of hope and solace. The Bohemians idolized her to a man. She became like a pet vivandière—the daughter of a ragged regiment. She reigned an absolute little queen of Bohemia, without knowing it. Her subjects vied with one another in forestalling and gratifying her wishes. There was one primary necessity to her happiness, namely, the re-establishment of her husband's health. If mortal men could accomplish this, they would do so speedily for the reward of seeing her happy and blooming.

Masculine reader of mine, have you ever lived in a remote Indian station, or hunted in the back woods of America, or been a long sea voyage in a ship without female passengers, or existed for a length of time, under any circumstances that did not permit of intercourse with the society of chaste and cultivated females? If so, you will be able to appreciate the delight of my Bohemians at finding themselves permitted to enjoy the friendship, and minister to the happiness, of a pure-hearted and accomplished little lady like Lucy Lynch.

Not to canvass motives individually, it would be difficult to over-estimate the services performed by the men I allude to—to our sick author and his little household. In the

first place, they staved off the immediate horrors of pecuniary necessity, which might otherwise have consigned the whole trio, husband, wife, and child, to the hospital or workhouse grave. Markworth was an invaluable auxiliary. He had not the slightest objection to any amount of absolute labour, provided he was spared the pain of seeking or inventing it (let me do him the justice to say that had any such objection existed he would have overcome it for a friend's sake, rather than for his own.) Marston, when taken ill, had a few commissions on hand, translations, compilations, and others. Most of them he had commenced—the plans of all being laid out, so that the mere writing of them was plain sailing to a competent person. Markworth, who wrote rapidly and admirably when his constructive powers were not taxed, thought finishing those works as good a plan for getting over the day as any other. Moreover, having no local habitation just then, and hating tavern benches and tavern society as cordially as he took the trouble to hate anything, the privilege of writing at Marston's lodgings all day and sleeping on Marston's sofa at night, with no more disagreeable person to talk to than Lucy, amounted to positive pleasure. Markworth finished all Marston's commissions in rapid succession. This not only brought in money to the household; but, also, in a measure, saved the chief's reputation from tarnish by the fulfilment of his engagements. Phil. Walrus, who was impulsively generous, had also a rich uncle, whom he "bled" periodically, by the most transparent and bare-faced devices. He came in opportunely with assistance on more than one occasion. Doctor Nussknacker, who had a republican contempt for money, and, like Markworth, never cared to earn more than a bare sufficiency for his slender wants—which he did by teaching languages—could only testify his devotion to the cause by suffering his little connection of pupils to go to rack and ruin, for the purpose of spending a day at Marston's bedside, hastening his recovery by a thousand friendly devices not usually included in the duties of a medical adviser. Mr. Clough

continued to confine himself to the menial department: he fetched whatever was wanted, and, when on the premises, relieved Lucy of the one arduous duty she had never been able to accomplish with anything like satisfaction to herself and husband—that of answering duns. Mr. Clough had been accustomed to this kind of work from an early date, and usually performed it with great coolness and success. When he found Lucy oppressed with household cares, if the weather happened to be fine, he would volunteer to take baby for a walk up and down the pavement of Cecil-street, pledging himself to go no further. Cecil-street usually extended to the Strand—sometimes to a greater distance; and baby, at this early stage of his career, became a frequenter of numerous wine-vaults and bar-parlours of the vicinity, to the wonder and admiration of maturer *habitués*.

It needed some such providential assistance, for Marston's recovery was slow and tedious. Even as it was, they were sometimes reduced to sad straits: for the soil of Bohemia is barren, and the crops are not always sufficient for the farmer's consumption. As soon as Marston was well enough to be removed with safety, it was found expedient to vacate the snug lodgings in Cecil-street for a less costly residence in Kentish-town. Thither I now propose to conduct my readers.

The time is some two or three nights after the events recorded in my last chapter. The scene is a small apartment—type of a class infinitely more wretched, in my opinion, than that “worst inn’s worst room,” in which Mr. Pope chose to perpetrate his barbarous murder of the Duke of Buckingham—the sitting-room of a third-rate suburban lodging-house. Who has not known—happy the Londoner who has not!—the miserable low ceiling—the damp walls—the narrow window that will never shut—the warped door, with its lock three inches below the staple—the four spider-legged cane-bottomed chairs—the scanty muslin curtains, waving to and fro in the draught, like detached cobwebs—the distorting glass over the mantel-piece—the

mangy peacock feathers, and the hideous plaster ornaments? Let me be spared a description in full.

At one side of as good a fire as a grate about the size of a moderate coffee-mill would admit of, sat, in a Windsor elbow chair, propped up with pillows, an emaciated and care-worn young man, staring at the fire with a countenance in which no expression was visible but one of hopeless despair. This was Marston Lynch. Near him sat a pretty, pale-faced little woman, busy with needle-work, from which she rose every now and then to arrange the invalid's pillow, to smooth his hair, to clasp his hand silently, or to whisper cheering words in his ear. It is needless to say who this was. Opposite Marston sat a sturdy, broad-shouldered, Saxon-faced young fellow, with unkempt hair and a fierce moustache, in ill-made clothes, the worse by many a stain and patch, and aggressive thick-soled highlow boots, who smoked from two inches of blackened clay, and brandished a stout healthy babe in his arms. This couple was Thomas Clough and Marston Lynch, junior, Esquires. Also smoking, and writing at a ricketty, ink-stained Pembroke table, that kept up a creaking accompaniment to every movement of his pen, was a young man some three or four years older than Marston, with a handsome but rather impassive countenance. This was Markworth.

"What a time Walrus is gone," Marston exclaimed, in a hollow, peevish voice.

"Hold your — grumbling," said Clough, breaking off short in a cheerful nursery rhyme. "If you wanted him to go to the Strand and back in five minutes, why didn't you order round your carriage and pair!"

"I am very much obliged to you, Clough, for your many acts of kindness," Marston began, in a tone of dignified injury, "but——"

"If you say that infernal word 'kindness' to me again I'll shy the"—Mr. Clough was about to add "baby at your head," but he substituted "pipe" for the former noun, in timely consideration for Mrs. Lynch's feelings.

"It is very foolish for you, Clough, to be angry with

what Lynch says," Markworth interposed quietly, without looking up from his paper. "It is natural to his weak state to be irritable, and, perhaps, unreasonable; but then it is, perhaps, natural for you to be the same under all circumstance—so it can't be helped."

"Do *you* want anything at your head, Markworth?" the wrathful Clough inquired.

"Certainly not. Why?"

"Because, don't be so infernally aggravating."

"I have no wish to aggravate anybody. I only think if you and Marston can't help saying disagreeable things to one another, the best plan will be to go on saying them as fast as you like, and neither to care about it. It won't disturb me in the least. I like it quite as well as anything else."

Mr. Clough's countenance broke slowly into a wide grin. Lucy pacified her husband with a noiseless kiss on the forehead.

"I think Clough's blowings up do me good," Marston said, with a melancholy smile; "they put something like life into me. You and Lucy, Markworth, let me have too much my own way."

"Clough certainly has the extraordinary gift of getting angry with people and things which I do not possess myself, but which was doubtless ordained in him for some beneficent purpose."

"Cluck! cluck! cluck! isn't he a thundering fool, my stunner?" was Mr. Clough's commentary to the baby.

"Do you think Walrus will succeed?" Marston asked, after a pause.

"No; sure he won't." Mr. Clough was decided on the point.

"He seemed very sanguine."

"Sanguine! he's always sanguine. I never knew him that he was not going to get three hundred and seventy pounds next Tuesday, at five-and-twenty minutes past two in the afternoon. Do you think a knowing card like

Haresfoot will give tin on account of a piece that hasn't got a line written? He's a bigger fool than I take him for if he does?"

"But Mr. Walrus says the idea is such an original and beautiful one," Lucy interposed; "and Mr. Haresfoot will be glad to secure it from any other manager."

"Mr. Walrus can talk a donkey's hind leg off, I have no doubt——"

"What preposterous nonsense, Clough," interrupted Markworth, "the days of miracles are passed—he could not do anything of the kind."

Mr. Markworth was something of a purist. Vulgar, illogical, or unmeaning figures of speech almost irritated him.

"Well, he won't talk any money out of old Haresfoot at any rate."

"If I do not get something to-morrow," Marston groaned, "what shall I do?"

"Do without," Mr. Clough suggested.

"But I have promised to pay the people of the house."

"Tell them you can't."

"I dare not face them." Marston buried his face in his hands, and rocked to and fro. "I cannot do it. Laugh at and despise me if you like—I deserve it, I know—but I cannot—anything but that!"

Lucy shuddered, and her heart seemed to stop beating. She, too, could do anything but *that*.

"Then if you were so precious anxious to pay them, why the deuce did you waste that tenner of Don Thingamy's?"

Marston groaned again.

"Oh! Mr. Clough, do not name that—you know it was *my* fault," Lucy said, with her eyes full of tears.

Mr. Clough confessed that he deserved to have his head punched, and requested baby to perform that office for him.

"I could not help it," Lucy continued.

"No, she couldn't," said Marston; "people came at

an unlucky hour and clamoured for money—she could not refuse them. I must not blame her—I never could.”

“Bless you,” Lucy whispered, with a grateful pressure of Marston’s hand.

A tremendous knocking at the street-door caused the little egg-shell of a house to tremble to its six-inch deep foundation.

“Here’s Phil!”

A light footstep cleared the little staircase in about three bounds, and Mr. Philip Walrus burst into the room. He looked very much as though he would burst out of it again, for Walrus was colossal of stature, and the little sitting-room scarcely large enough to hold him without damage to its walls, floor, and ceiling.

“Well, my busy bees,” said Philip, sitting on a weak chair, which caused him considerable alarm by an ominous crack and undulation beneath his weight: “still sipping the sweets of industry? Talking about sipping, is there anything to drink? No? I’m glad of it. A taste for ardent spirits is the canker-worm of modern society. Mrs. Lucy you’re laughing—I’m afraid you don’t appreciate the high morality of those sentiments for which——”

“Stow your gab, and tell us how you got on,” said Mr. Clough, politely.

“Tommy, my dear child, unless you immediately counterfeited the manners of a gentleman, I’ll slap your face and pull your hair. Don’t put the baby too near to me, for I haven’t recovered from the measles. Well! I’ve seen old Haresfoot.”

“What does he say?” Marston asked, listlessly.

“Thundering old humbug! Grinned in my face, and said when we could show him the manuscript it would receive his best attention. I’ll show him up in the *Penny Cane*, and ruin him. However, it doesn’t matter, old fellow. I couldn’t have written the piece without your assistance, and you’ll be able to finish it to your own satisfaction.”

“When shall I be able to finish anything?” said Marston, bitterly.

"Look here, Phil," Clough observed; "money must be had to-morrow. What have you got?"

"Seven-and-six."

"That's no use. Where did you get it?"

"Half-a-crown on the bustle, from the stage-door-keeper, to pay the cab that wasn't waiting; three-and-six from Charles, at the Blue Monkey, to make my little account round money, so that I should remember it the easier; and eighteenpence from the boy at the *Cane* office. He'd been up two nights, and was too sleepy to say he hadn't got any money."

"Well, we must have more. Mark's finishing a tale of Marston's for the *Domestic Teapot*. That will be two quid to the good." (It should be observed that Mr. Clough never would, on any account, make use of an ordinary expression if, by going a little out of his way, he could discover a slang equivalent.)

"I won't touch a penny of it," said Marston, peevishly.

"Stop a bit, my dear child. You will if your medical advisers pronounce it good for you. In the first place, Mrs. Lucy, take charge of these five white gentlemen for present exigences."

"Don't take them, Lucy. I am sick of plundering and fleecing you fellows. It must come to an end."

"So it shall. Only wait for the words of wisdom. Mrs. Lucy, do as you are bid, like a good child."

"Lucy, you shall not—"

"Oh! then, I had better go to Wolverhampton. You mean to say you refuse to borrow from me five shillings, which I shall expect you to pay back to-morrow?"

"To-morrow, indeed!"

"I repeat that I shall expect you to pay me back to-morrow."

"What do you mean?"

"Ah, now you are coming to reason. My children, I have prepared a dramatic surprise for you. Do you know that handwriting?"

Walrus produced a letter, the address of which he submitted to Marston's inspection.

"Why, it is Gregory Lynch's—my uncle."

"Just so; and my particular friend and faithful correspondent."

"You—how long have you known him?"

"Never saw or spoke to the buffer in my life, and don't want to. But he writes what is called a good letter, dots his t's prettily, and crosses his i's like copper-plate. Attention."

Mr. Walrus rose in an oratorical attitude and read, with much gesticulation, the following epistle to his wondering auditors.

"To Philip Walrus, Esq."

"DEAR SIR—In answer to your polite note just received, which does the greatest credit alike to your head and heart ('a hackneyed phrase,' Mr. Walrus commented, 'but let us hope merited'), I have only to say that the differences unhappily existing between myself and your friend, my nephew, Marston Lynch, were never of my seeking. I am extremely grieved to hear of his late illness and present distresses, of which, if I had received any earlier intimation, I would have taken measures to alleviate them, to the best of my ability. I am in very delicate health myself, and my stay in London will be limited. If Marston's health will permit him to call upon me, I shall be happy to see him, with my step-daughter, Lucy, tomorrow, at eleven o'clock, when I have to request that he will meet me with an utter forgetfulness of past misunderstandings. If he should be unable to come himself, if you, or any other friend he may appoint, will call on me at the time I have made, I shall be glad to make some arrangements for his present comfort and ultimate benefit. Thanking you for your kindness in calling my attention to the matter,

Believe me, dear Sir,

"Very truly, yours,

"GREGORY LYNCH.

"Long's Hotel, Bond-street, Thursday."

Marston remained nursing his chin in silence for some seconds.

"So you had written to him on my account?"

"Of course, I had, my dear child."

"Why did you not tell me?"

"Well, I wanted to. I flatter myself the epistle was rather choice in its way, and it went to my heart to waste it entirely on old Gregory and the Post-office. But then you see, my infant, you probably would have raised some objection."

"That I certainly should."

"Like a —— fool!" Mr. Clough growled.

"You will see, papa, will you not, dear?" Lucy asked, imploringly, her wan face flushed by a new-born hope.

"No."

"Oh! but you will though, my estimable young friend."

"I will have no assistance from that man," said Marston, petulantly. "He is a villain. I have told you over and over again that I am convinced he has robbed Lucy."

"Then, don't you think it would be advisable to get back a little on account, while the dear old gentleman is in a restitution humour?"

"I will not take a penny from him. I can never thank you, dear friends, enough for what you have done. I ought not to refuse you anything. But if you would force me to humble myself to that man, I can only beg you, as a last favour, to leave me to my fate; and forgive me—forgive me; for I cannot do it."

Tom Clough rose from his seat, placed the baby in his mother's lap, and stood on the hearth-rug, with his arms folded, confronting Marston Lynch with a stern countenance.

"Now, look here, Marston Lynch," he said, "I say a good many things, and a good many stupid and a good many blackguard things, that I don't mean in particular. But what I am going to say now I do mean. If you let any of your damned nonsense stand in the way of this opportunity, not only of saving your own life, which isn't

of much consequence, but of bringing back some colour to your wife's cheeks, and flesh on her bones, which is—if I catch you at this sort of game, I tell you, by the Lord Harry, ill or well, weak or strong, I'll give you such an infernal thrashing that you won't recover for a month, that's all."

Mr. Clough lit a fresh pipe angrily, and sat down.

Lucy placed the baby on Marston's lap, and throwing herself at her husband's feet, clasped them both with her arms.

"You will go and see him, Marston, for my sake and baby's, will you not?"

Marston Lynch was silent. He trembled, and tears rolled down his cheeks.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BEGINNING LIFE AGAIN.

FEW of Marston Lynch's resolutions were difficult to shake. The one that he would on no account accept his uncle's offers of reconciliation gave way speedily under the weight of his friends' remonstrances and his wife's exhortations.

On the following morning Marston and Lucy were up and dressed early; and something like an hour and a half ere there would be much prospect of Gregory Lynch's being out of bed, this pair had left their magnificent suburban villa (I really believe the wretched little rabbit-hutch was called a villa), *en route* for Long's Hotel, Bondstreet—the temporary sojourn of the great Longport merchant.

There were two reasons for this early stirring. First, Marston, always impatient, had become more so than ever since his illness, and having made up his mind to the magnanimous course of accepting the olive-branch held out to him by his uncle, he could not rest till the imposing ceremony had been performed. He had awakened several times in the night to ask Lucy the time, like a child eager for the dawn of a long promised holiday. He had been unable to eat his breakfast, and, had the resources of his wardrobe permitted, there is no doubt that he would have made many experimental changes in the decoration of his outward man before feeling satisfied with his personal

appearance for so great an occasion. But, alas! the days of wearable coats, waistcoats, and trousers in the plural, or even dual number, were over with Marston Lynch: and such luxuries as breast-pins, rings, and watches, were as memories of a past existence. Marston Lynch was shabby, or to borrow an image from the poetry of the present generation, "seedy"—a state of things by no means agreeable to any member of the community, but which, to the artistic or poetical mind, is simply intolerable. The same mental condition which makes a sturdy picturesque beggar, with matted locks and beard, and streaming with parti-coloured rags, an object of admiration, renders the miserably-clad "respectable man," with his threadbare coat, of a forgotten make, buttoned up to conceal badness or deficiency of linen, which it only morally exposes—his limp hat, that would only have been *not* laughable two years ago when such shapes were worn by everybody—darned gloves, and saw-like shirt collar—an object of ridicule and pity. Why? Are artists and poets, then, such indifferent philosophers that they care to judge of men, or be judged of men themselves, by the cut and newness of their outward garments? It may be so. Or it may be that the man—the struggling man at all events—who now-a-days professes a contempt for external appearances, is a greater fool than the man who pronounces him one for the practical expression of such contempt. On another hand, it is tolerably certain that artists and poets have a keener sense of the ridiculous than other people. Coats, hats, gloves, and shirt-collars, as at present constructed, are ridiculous objects in themselves, and can only be worn without a sense of shame and discomfort when in their newest gloss and currency. An article of modern clothing that has once fallen into the rearward of fashion is a conspicuous absurdity; and its wearer stands in the unenviable position of a fool who has adhered to an obsolete folly. Moreover, there is something sadly ridiculous in the toadyism which poverty pays to riches, by obeying its sumptuary laws, as to discomfort

and hideousness in dress, when debarred of any of the compensating advantages which alone can make such tyranny tolerable. Why should a poor gentleman, whose poverty makes the name a mockery, and excludes him from every comfortable dinner-table where he may have once been welcome, stint himself in his daily supply of cold beef and cabbage for the sake of a shadowy semblance of the broad-cloth and beaver proprieties purchased at second-hand shops, at seemingly low but really exorbitant prices—things that neither defy cold nor disarm suspicion—when, in a clean blouse or a stout workman's dreadnought, according to season, a defiant wide-awake, and an honest pair of fustian continuations, for him the stout might foam, the pig might smoke, and the apple-sauce cream—aye, by Saint Anne, and stuffing should be hot in the mouth? There must be insurmountable obstacles to such an independent course; for it is one we never see a poor gentleman adopting. However, there are soundly politic reasons why the artist or writer, living by the exercise of his talents, should be well-dressed. To be otherwise is an admission of poverty. This would be of no consequence, but that the world persists in attributing poverty, which is equivalent with non-success, to incapacity; the mere suspicion of which, to such men as I speak of, is fatal. Briefly, Marston Lynch was not and could not be well-dressed for the present. He hurried over his toilette with the contemptuous haste of an actor gabbling a part he is ashamed of being obliged to play.

The second reason why Marston Lynch and Lucy should be early a-foot was a reason, as some will pronounce, with more reason in it. Kentish-town was a long way from Bond-street, and Marston Lynch was very weak; he could only as yet walk slowly and with difficulty. As yet the days of cheap omnibuses were not; and the more expensive conveyances then in vogue were beyond their means. The small sum left by Walrus on the preceding evening had been absorbed at once in the vortex of household necessities. The journey must be performed

on foot, and by slow and easy stages. Marston would have undertaken it alone, but Lucy would not let him. He might be taken ill on the road, or "a thousand things," as Mrs. Lucy expressed it: though I should like to know, in the event of any one of those thousand contingencies presenting itself, what she, poor little soul, could have done to meet it? However, so impressed was she with the necessity of accompanying Marston, with a view to his support and protection, that she even consented to leave "baby" in charge of the landlady's daughter, an undersized damsel, of doubtful trustworthiness, and of slovenliness as to which there was no doubt whatever. The little mother's apprehensions, it is true, had been greatly calmed by her usual ally on such emergencies, Mr. Thomas Clough, who had preferred passing the night uncomfortably on chairs in Marston's sitting-room, rather than be driven to the Bohemian's last extremity of going home—and who had expressed his intention of passing the day in the immediate neighbourhood, for the purpose of making careful studies of a picturesque pump by which he had been fascinated, and promised to look in, from time to time, with a supervising eye to the nursery arrangements.

Look at poor Marston Lynch, with an emaciated face, stooping shoulders and threadbare garments, leaning, with one hand, on a walking stick, and with the other, on a frail and slender arm that should have leant on his. Consider that he has a four miles' walk before him, which he must perform for the want of a shilling, and which it will take him two hours to accomplish. Consider that the object of that walk is to humble himself (for it is useless to blink the truth) before a man by whom he believes himself to have been wronged, and whom, in the pride of his youth, strength, and talents, he had taunted, defied, and insulted on every possible occasion. And upon the charity (he repeats the word bitterly to himself many times between his closed teeth) of that man depends his only hope of relief, peace, and health, perhaps of life. Having reconciled himself to

the acceptance of assistance from his uncle, his mind can, for the present, take in no more disagreeable possibilities. The idea that that assistance may yet fail him, he will not contemplate. It is his one resource left, and fail him it must not. He is going to beg—that is quite humiliation enough—the alms *must* be abundant. He is like a famished man on a raft, who can only strain his eyes to one speck on the horizon; it is, it must be, the long expected ship that is to bring him succour. How will Gregory Lynch receive him? What will be the extent of his relenting kindness, or, as Marston loves to consider it, tardy justice? What will be the amount of submission exacted from him in return for the means to grow strong, to rest, and to live? These are the only questions Marston Lynch can ask himself. All his old projects of self-reliance and exertion for wealth and fame are as vanished dreams of the past, even as the shipwrecked man's memories of home, and strife, and duty—all forgotten in the thought of the bread that should be contained in the hold of that one ship on the horizon.

Contrast this picture with one I have shown you of a handsome impetuous boy fancying that the world was at his foot, who was petted, caressed, and loved by all who knew him, who had too early tasted the seductive sweets of fame and luxury; and admit that whatever the faults and failings of my poor anti-hero may have been, his punishment is at least as much as he can bear.

How? Has he not a noble and devoted wife who loves him more than all the world, and a darling child? With these blessings, what can happen to harm him?

Hunger for three, reader. That is the answer. Try it—for one—to begin with; and see how you like it.

I have heard somewhere a stupid old song of a past generation, (when the "Jolly God," the "rosy morn," and similar stereotypes, were implicitly believed in as essentials to genuine poetry), which speaks of "lovely woman" as the being who

"Doubles up our joys and divides our cares."

It is a lie. It is only his happiness that an honest man will

consent to, or even can, share with the woman he loves. There can be no division of sorrow any more than there can be a division of typhus fever. The man who, being wretched himself, derives a consolation from inoculating those nearest to him with his misery is not one whose acquaintance I desire. Such people (who are by no means uncommon remind me of Mr. Fag in the "Rivals," who, because he had been bullied by his master, kicks the errand-boy.

Marston walked very slowly, and had to rest many times. Poor Lucy encouraged and cheered him to the best of her powers, which were not very great, Lucy being only a kind of lunar satellite, in a system of which Marston Lynch was the solar centre. Her face could only reflect back such light as the sun shed upon it. When Marston's face was eclipsed by sorrow that of his little wife was in darkness.

On this occasion Lucy was rather inclined to be hopeful than otherwise. The fact that Marston had consented to forgive his uncle—for doing she had not the clearest idea what—was a greater matter for rejoicing; Gregory's relenting was a sufficient proof that her husband's great merits were at last about to be recognised. She was, moreover, grateful to Gregory Lynch for affording her an opportunity of ceasing to think unfavourably of him. She was a little timid at the prospect of meeting him it is true, and absolutely frightened at the possibility of the terrible Mrs. Gregory being present at the interview. But Lucy was one of the bravest cowards in the world. In the old times of martyrdom she would have gone trembling all over to the stake, or suffered herself to be frightened to death by wild beasts with the greatest firmness and determination. However, it was very certain that on this particular occasion no possible harm could come to her, for would not her husband be present? It was remarkable and characteristic that Mrs. Lynch persisted in considering her husband a model of physical as well as moral courage and strength; and the evidence of her senses that he was scarcely able to drag himself along the pavement without

the assistance of her arm and a walking-stick did not at all weaken her firm conviction that, in the event of her being insulted or aggrieved by a passing giant, her companion could at a moment's notice, by the exercise of some latent power within him, rouse himself to the infliction of terrible chastisement on the offender.

They spoke very little on the way. Marston indulged in a few feeble rhodomontades as to the dignified attitude it was his intention to assume in the presence of his humbled and repentant kinsman; how he would accept of no service at that kinsman's hands that would at all compromise him in his own estimation; that he would rather starve; and much nonsense of that kind. Marston knew in his heart that he would rather not starve, and that he had for more than a twelvemonth forfeited the right to do so. If suicide be justifiable at all, it can only be so in the singular number. Humiliating as was the admission, Marston could not deny to himself that he was prepared to accept any terms his uncle might propose, not absolutely and shamefully degrading; and to accept them, moreover, with thankfulness and rejoicing. So he left off bragging, and occupied himself with building castles in the air as to the peaceful life in store for himself and his dear ones.

The last half mile or so of their journey was performed in silence. The approaching interview engaged all their thoughts. As they neared the hotel Lucy cast a deprecating glance over her humble attire, and blessed the invention of plate-glass shop windows, which enabled her to obtain that indispensable glimpse of the state of her head-gear without which no woman of any age can present herself in unaccustomed society. Marston was like an actor at the wing mumbling over his part, and meditating the manner of his *entrée* on the scene.

They reached the door of the hotel, before which a private brougham was waiting. Our two poor relations observed this, not for any connexion that it suggested with the movements of their wealthy kinsman, but from the

common tendency of the human mind on the eve of trying *crises* to seek relief from its absorbing occupation by noticing indifferent objects. The driver of the vehicle, standing at the horse's head, touched his hat to Marston, with a look of recognition and a kind of qualified civility. Marston remembered to have seen the man's face, but could not call to mind where. The question was not worth asking, and was instantaneously forgotten. Marston and Lucy, with beating hearts, pressed each other's arm, exchanged a reassuring smile, and were about to enter the hotel, when—

Don Sancho de Saumarez, with Maud Carlton on his arm, swept past them out of the hotel, entered the carriage, and were driven off rapidly in the direction of Oxford-street.

The incident occurred in less time than I have taken to tell it, but in these two or three seconds a complete drama was enacted. Lucy's flimsy washed-out muslin skirt had come in contact with the magnificent flounces of Miss Carlton. The two women had drawn back, exchanging glances of mutual recognition and aversion. Lucy had, without any definite reason, instinctively connected Maud Carlton with the origin of their present misfortunes. She had divined that there were grounds of jealousy and strife between them, and, with all her gentleness, Mrs. Lucy was quite woman enough to hate, and that pretty strongly, any one of her own sex whom she might suspect of designs—past, present, or possible—prejudicial to her heart's peace. The first cry of surprise over, on the occasion alluded to, she had shrunk from Miss Carlton as from the touch of pollution, clung proudly to her precious husband, whom she protected, as it were, from the designs of the wicked enchantress by a look of defiance as insolently contemptuous—aye, and as cruel—as ever Maud's own face had worn in her bitterest and most wayward mood. One of Lucy's old glances—humble, deprecating, and imploring—would, perhaps, have touched Maud's heart, and the elaborate fabric of Don Sancho de Saumarez might have been scattered to the winds by one impetuous gust of forgiveness

and self-reproach. But the little vixen (*pro tem*) had chosen, in that one movement, to declare war, which the more powerful fury accepted. Miss Carlton returned the assault with a withering smile of hatred and triumph, and a searching, comprehensive look, which as Lucy felt, took in the whole list of their miseries—her old bonnet with faded ribbons, her mended gloves and shoes, her pale cheeks and sunken eyes, Marston's stooping shoulders and emaciated form, his dejected face, the whitening seams of his coat, his darned and patched linen—it seemed even to penetrate to the shabby dogs'-eared leather *portemonnaie* in her pocket, that for weeks had contained nothing but pawnbrokers' duplicates—even to the empty drawers and cupboards of their miserable apology for a home in Kentish Town. All these Miss Carlton seemed to know and rejoice in, as she threw herself back on the cushions of her snug vehicle, of which she drew up the window with an impatient jerk, as if to interpose a material barrier between herself and the atmosphere contaminated by the breath of unfortunate wretches.

Marston had remained motionless. The gallant Saumarez had recognised him, but being taken by surprise, and without time for the construction of a plot (without which preparation he could do nothing), had brushed past his former friend with a sneaking precipitancy, and a somewhat cur-like expression on his usually engaging countenance, which, on this occasion only in the course of this history, was observed to be somewhat flushed.

Our young couple looked after the receding carriage for some seconds in silence. Then they looked at each other.

"What can this mean?"

"No good, I fear; but let us know at once."

"Yes, let us know," Lucy said, with a heavy sigh.

Neither had the insincerity to pretend to the other that the visit of the pair who had just departed had been made to any other resident in the hotel than their uncle; or that it might have been one to him of mere formality, and in no

way connected with their own business. They instinctively felt the contrary was the case, and entered the hotel with the gloomy prescience of calamity.

Marston inquired of a waiter if Mr. Gregory Lynch was within; and was answered in the affirmative.

The visitors sent up their cards, and waited in the entrance-hall a few anxious moments, that seemed hours.

The waiter returned with a curt message to the effect that Mr. Lynch could not be seen.

Lucy trembled, and Marston's lip quivered as he faltered,

"Perhaps he is not up yet."

"Yes, he's up, but he can't be seen—that's the message."

"Perhaps if we were to call again——"

"The lady said you need'nt trouble yourselves to call again, as Mr. Lynch declined seeing you."

The man delivered it respectfully enough, and with evident reluctance.

"The lady—I presume you mean Mrs. Lyneh?"

"Yes——sir," the waiter good-naturedly added, as a compensation to the man whom his official position had compelled him to be the means of distressing.

"Was Mr. Lynch present, may I ask?"

"He was."

"And he said nothing?"

"Nothing whatever, sir,"

"Thank you; then we will not trouble ourselves a second time. Good morning to you."

"Good morning, sir. Going to have a change in the weather, I think."

He was a compassionate waiter to bestow this amount of civility, without hope of a shilling, upon the two young people who looked so disappointed and so poor; and a thoughtful one to run as he did to hold the glass door open for their exit, bowing to Lucy as she passed precisely as he had bowed five minutes ago to the splendid lady in the brougham. It was as kind on the waiter's part as the gift of a quartern loaf from a baker.

When they reached the street, the forced self-composure which Marston had observed before the hotel servants, gave way utterly. He could not speak. He trembled fearfully. The muscles of his face quivered, and at length a torrent of tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Dear, dear Marston—don't. For heaven's sake—anything but that!"

"What shall we do?"

That was now the question.

They walked mechanically towards Piccadilly. Lucy squeezing her husband's arm to her own, pressing his hand beneath her shawl, and imploring him not to give way.

"It is very cruel."

"It is very—very—very cruel."

"Was that letter written only to raise false hopes, and cast me lower than ever by disappointing them?"

"No—no. I cannot believe that; there has been some misunderstanding—or some misrepresentation——"

"From whom?"

"I don't know—from his wife, perhaps—or—or—No matter, let us forget it, dear, as if it had never happened."

"Yes, let us forget it—that is the only plan. I must set to work and earn some money. Yes, I must set to work."

"That's my own dear. Let us go home."

Home! Marston shuddered. He had never contemplated re-entering that wretched place except to leave it for ever.

"Let us go to Walrus's. I want to rest."

Walrus's lodgings were not far off. The hospitable Philip was fortunately at home, and gave them such welcome as he could afford. He was shocked at the inexplicable cruelty of the treatment they had received, and expressed his intention of "having it out with old Gregory," as a personal matter,—he having been made the unconscious instrument of Marston's disappointment.

"No, Phil.; let it rest," said Marston. "It is over. I have been the victim of a terrible vengeance of some kind. But whoever they may be I cannot risk a second contest with such enemies. It seems as though it had killed me already, and I am beginning a new life. Yes, and I must begin to-day—now, and in earnest. Lucy, my dear, go home."

"And you, dear?"

"I?—oh, I must—see about something. I must call on publishers, and so forth—get something to do, in fact; or what will become of us?"

Lucy suppressed a heaving sigh.

"But you are not well-enough to-day—you should keep quiet."

"Quiet? Where? Where the coalman knocks at the door three times an hour, and the baker bullies you from his cart up to the first-floor window, and the green-grocer forces his way up-stairs, and takes a seat with his back against the door? Thank you, my dear. Such circumstances are not conducive to the flow of inspiration, or the composure of thoughts."

"What will become of us?"

Mr. Walrus suggested a monosyllabic remedy.

"Bolt."

"From Fryingpan-court into Fireplace-alley—even if we could raise a cab-fare, for that distance? I don't see any advantage in the change. Can you pay Lucy's omnibus home, as she calls it, Phil?"

"To be sure—and a few bob over; but what's your move?"

"Oh! I don't know. I must try—something. Lucy, dear, Phil. will see you into an omnibus. I'll rest a bit, and think of something. There go, there's a good girl, or I shall be angry."

He *had* been often angry with her of late. Lucy was giddy with despair. What should she do? There was Marston, scarcely recovered from a fever, and crushed with a bitter disappointment, in a wild and unsettled state,

claiming to be left to himself in town. On the other hand, she had been three hours away from baby!—a state of things previously unknown in the existence of that individual. She could not decide for herself. As usual, she resolved that Marston should decide for her. She approached him, and taking his hand in hers looked him earnestly in the face, saying,

“How do you think I can leave you, dear, in this state? Ask yourself, and tell me what I ought to do.”

Always that terrible responsibility of directing the actions and providing for the happiness of another; Could she never relieve him of so much as one grain of the load, by a single act of self-reliance and decision? No! Marston felt, that while she lived, so completely was her volition absorbed in his, that he alone must bear the burden; and even though it should crush him, all she could do would be to watch his sufferings and weep. The charge he had undertaken was one that would allow of no sleeping at his post. In his present weak and dejected condition, what a relief it would have been for him—to give way to lamentation or despair. He was sick of life, and could almost have made an end to it: but his life was not his own. Here was this little woman at his elbow dunning him for that supply of hope and moral support with which he was as much bound to furnish her as with gowns, bonnets, and house room.

Bankrupt as was Marston Lynch of the commodities required of him, he was an honest debtor. He roused himself from his despairing mood with such demonstrations of strength and cheerfulness as he could assume—kissed his wife, and answered as follows:—

“Go home, my darling, and attend to your child; you may do so safely. I am not such a coward as to make away with myself—if that is what you are afraid of. I am only going to do what I told you—to seek for some employment—”

“But you are not fit to walk about.”

“Let me see a fair chance of earning some money and I shall be fit to run.”

"And you will come home straight?"

"Straight."

"And will promise me not to give way?"

"On my honour."

"And promise me, not on your honour, but on your love, that if you should meet with fresh disappointments in what you seek, you will not let them make you in the least bit in the world unhappy?"

This was rather tyrannical—Marston felt it so. It was like extorting a promise from a man that he would never cry out in the event of his burning his fingers. Our wives, are, however, very exacting in such matters, and they must have their way. Marston gave the required promise, and wondered if he should be able to keep it.

"I believe you."

Lucy kissed her husband many times, and whispered in his ear several exhortations on the subject of "keeping up," and departed on her homeward-bound journey, Mr. Walrus volunteering to escort her to her conveyance.

Marston having fortified himself with an hour's rest and a substantial meal, provided by his entertainer, walked forth on his mission of beginning the world again.

Alas! he little thought how near the very beginning he would have to commence the operation. He called on several publishers in succession to whom he was mortified to find his name almost or entirely unknown. His only success as an author had been in connexion with dramatic literature—a department quite distinct and apart from that of ordinary publishing business. He was received in all cases politely, but with one unvarying result. He was asked what he had brought to show. He had brought nothing. He could merely mention certain subjects for books which he had thought of, and which he felt confident of being able to treat successfully. The publishers felt no doubt of this whatever, and would be happy to give his manuscripts their earliest attention on any of the works being completed. In answer to requests for casual employment, such as translations, compilations, &c., he was

always told that such undertakings usually emanated, like original works, from the writers; and in the event of anything of the kind originating with the publishers, they were naturally in the habit of entrusting them to people whom they had been in the habit of employing, and with whose capabilities they were well acquainted. Marston soon got weary of this repetition, and was about to return home disconsolately, in a frame of mind very inadequate to the fulfilment of his promise to Lucy, when his eye was attracted by a name on a door-plate which he recognised as that of a publisher whom he remembered to have heard spoken of in no very complimentary terms, either as to his liberality or graciousness, by certain writers of his acquaintance. This publisher was, moreover, one of the very highest *caste*, and Marston had not yet the courage to present himself at any but second or third-rate houses. What had deterred him? Not any under-estimate of his own powers, depend upon it. It was simply the consciousness of his shabby appearance that made him unwilling to parade his present misery in places where he had yet some lingering ambition to be one day received with distinction—an ambition which proves that there was some hope for Marston Lynch yet.

"Well, he can't eat me," thought Marston; "and bear as they describe him, he may have the politeness to offer me a chair for five minutes, which will be a god-send. It will only make one more disappointment, and there's no hurry for getting home."

It was that going home, without having conquered a single publisher, that Marston Lynch was afraid of.

So, overcoming the restraints of feeling, Marston Lynch called upon the Publisher, entered into an important engagement, and became a POPULAR WRITER.



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